Literary Laughter in Augustan Poetry: Vergil, Horace, and Ovid

Caleb Michael Xavier Dance

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2014

ABSTRACT

Literary Laughter in Augustan Poetry: Vergil, Horace, and Ovid

Caleb Michael Xavier Dance

This dissertation examines literary laughter in Latin poetry and, specifically, the ways in which textually-witnessed laughter functions as a guide to reader response and as a genre marker in select Vergilian, Horatian, and Ovidian poems.

The introduction first describes the Latin vocabulary of laughter and the risible and then introduces the texts of Augustan poetry to be examined. The remainder of the introduction surveys theoretical treatments of laughter that appear in Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero and underlie three prevailing modern explanations of laughter: the superiority, relief, and incongruity theories.

My inquiry is divided into two complementary parts, to each of which I devote three chapters. Part I (Chapters 1, 2, and 3) explores laughter's function as text-directed literary criticism—what I call a textual laugh track. My approach emphasizes that the vocabulary of laughter and the risible as used by Vergil, Horace, and Ovid often functions metacommunicatively, offering to the reader a set of directions for how to respond to particular texts. Part 2 (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) considers laughter's role as a conspicuous piece in the assembling of specific generic puzzles. Horace's *Satires*, Vergil's *Eclogues*, and Ovid's *Amores* all feature the vocabulary of laughter and the risible in their verses, and they utilize this vocabulary to various genre-determined—and genre-determining—ends. My objective throughout the dissertation is to present laughter as a dynamic human behavior that, through its appearance in Augustan literature, not only offers inroads to a specific “cultural psychology” but also proves itself an illuminating point of contact between the ancient and modern world.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To thank Katharina Volk as my dissertation advisor, while accurate, fails to do justice to the many ways in which she has shaped this dissertation and my thoughts on literary laughter. She has offered unfailing guidance, support, and good humor, asking all of the right questions at all of the right times. I also thank the other members of my dissertation committee—Jim Zetzel, Gareth Williams, Kristina Milnor, and Joy Connolly—as well as Liz Irwin and Marco Fantuzzi for their valuable suggestions at different stages of this project.

Thanks are also due to Colin Webster and Mathias Hanses, both of whom offered helpful comments over coffees, beers, and in the course of our far-too-infrequent dissertation writing group meetings. Lily van Diepen read several chapters and generously shared her thoughts, encouragement, and love in my last months of writing. Charley McNamara was a boundless source of friendship and scholarly support during many years of laughter in Morningside.

I thank my fellow graduate students and friends at Columbia University. Joe, Zoë, James, Kate, Sarah, Molly, Selina, and Gerry are some of the many folks who made me consistently look forward to walking into Hamilton Hall and Butler Library each day.

I gratefully acknowledge my siblings Zachary, Gabriel, Catherine, and Smruti who have in their own ways made this dissertation possible, but in no way more than by living in close proximity and by sharing their friendship and love throughout these past years. My parents Frank and Carol have modeled many different ways of being successful professors, and I thank them for encouraging me to wander down this happy path many years ago.

And special thanks to New York City for making this dissertation—and countless occasions of laughter—a reality.

To my father and mother—

parents and professors,

but always parents first.

INTRODUCTION

In Book 2 of Cicero's *De oratore*, during a discussion about the place of laughter and humor in oratory, the character Julius Caesar Strabo sets forth several questions: "Concerning laughter, there are five things which are to be asked: 1) what it is; 2) from where it comes; 3) whether it befits an orator to want to provoke it; 4) to what extent; and 5) what the classes of the laughable are."[1] His response to the first question (the one concerning the nature of laughter) immediately follows, but it is more teasing disclaimer than proper answer: upon raising supplemental questions about laughter's essence and power and unique physical manifestations, Caesar concludes that such topics have no bearing on the current discussion. "And even if they were pertinent, I would nevertheless be fine *not* knowing what even those who claim to know don't know."[2]

I offer a similar disclaimer: I do not know why humans laugh, especially when those explanations offered by expert thinkers and scholars for thousands of years have been found unsatisfactory enough to warrant new or revised accounts of laughter from subsequent generations of expert thinkers and scholars. There exist numerous hypotheses from a variety of disciplines that attempt to explain human laughter (offering evolutionary, psychological, physiological, and sociological accounts), but a general consensus is nevertheless lacking. To appreciate the depth of the "mystery" of laughter, one need only consider that the reasons people laugh are sometimes unknown to the "laughers" themselves, not to mention the outside observers of laughter. Should we expect to be able to explain laughter as a human behavior when we cannot even account for our own individual experience of the phenomenon?

---

1 *De or.* 2.235: *de risu quinque sunt, quae quaerantur: unum, quid sit; alterum, unde sit; tertium, sitne oratoris uelle risum movere; quartum, quatenus; quintum, quae sint genera ridiculi.*

2 *De or.* 2.235: *et, si pertineret, nescire me tamen id non puderet, quod ne illi quidem scirent, qui pollicerentur*.

I am reminded of a friend who is (and, by his own admission, always has been) particularly susceptible to inexplicable laughter. As a child, he would realize that he was often the only person laughing on any given occasion, and when asked why he was laughing, he would offer the reply, "Oh, it's an inside joke." It was not until some time later that he learned that an "inside joke" is not simply a joke *inside* one's own head. He had no idea that an inside joke includes other people and relies upon "insiders" to appreciate it. Nevertheless, he offered his explanation simply because it was *an* explanation, and it was satisfactory enough to those asking; my friend, by his own recollection, was never asked to articulate additional explanations for his inexplicable bouts of laughter.

People desire, and even demand, explanations for human behavior, seeking a cause for most any effect. When that "effect" is laughter—a predominantly social behavior with often-paradoxical, simultaneous, and instantaneous repercussions, such as inclusion and exclusion, flattery and insult, sympathy and anger—the desire for a "causal" account is all the greater. And so it is perhaps surprising that the broadest, least "scientific" explanation is often one of the most persuasive: if one asks a friend why she laughed at something, a common (and remarkably acceptable) response will be, "Because it was funny." The psychologist Edmund Bergler formulates this explanation as the "popular theory" of laughter: "[O]ne laughs when and because something is funny, and something is funny because and when one laughs."[3]

The deliberate circularity of the "theory" simply shifts the question to what "funny" means. Is "funny" a synonym for "humorous"? What about the difference between "funny ha-ha" and "funny peculiar"? Those who study laughter agree that laughter and humor do not overlap cleanly, despite the fact that the two words are often used interchangeably. Consider the laughter that may accompany indignation (a "scoff") or the wide variety of things that one deems

3 Bergler (1956) *vii*.

humorous without recognizing them with laughter. The two topics (laughter and humor) are nevertheless often conflated, even to the extent that some common "laughter theories" are also referred to as "humor theories."

The explorations contained in the chapters that follow, although they concern laughter and humor and, by necessity, draw upon several hypotheses about laughter, are not about laughter *per se* but about the use of laughter in literary texts. Here a parallel with Cicero's *excursus* on laughter in *De oratore* proves illustrative. In Cicero's work, the topic of the dialogue is the nature of oratory and so laughter's role and proper deployment *in oratory* are foregrounded in the passage on laughter in Book 2. Though one might wish that Cicero had made his characters discuss the philosophy of laughter, such a discussion would have fallen outside the scope of the work and, as Caesar suggests in *De oratore* 2.235, would likely have been inconclusive. Likewise, in my own discussion, the literary effects of laughter in select works of Vergil, Horace, and Ovid will frame the exploration, but a thoroughgoing explanation of the behavior of laughter is not attempted.

Because my inquiry is of a literary nature, I use the Latin vocabulary of laughter and the risible as a point of entry into—and deliberate limitation within—an exploration of how and to what end laughter is used in poems by these Augustan authors. My two main areas of inquiry, which, though distinct, overlap and converge, are 1) laughter's function as text-directed literary criticism and 2) laughter's role as a genre-specific occurrence. Though I often speculate as to what prompts a textual laugh or what effect a specific occasion of laughter has, I shy away from attempting to construct a grand, unified theory of laughter. Instead I draw upon those theories of laughter that have been established (and reestablished) over the last two millennia as they seem most applicable. Thus I assure the reader now that the nature of laughter as a human behavior will not be unlocked or "discovered" in these explorations. Rather, I intend to offer some insight

into how writers in the ancient world, and, more specifically, literary Romans of the Augustan age, engaged with laughter.

And so, much like Caesar in his discussion of laughter in *De oratore*, I feel compelled to enumerate my paths of inquiry for this introductory chapter and to be content to leave certain questions (and, when not the questions themselves, their answers) to other scholars. In setting forth an "orientation to" laughter in the pages that follow, I consider the following questions: 1) what is the vocabulary of laughter and the risible in Greek and Latin; 2) why are Vergil, Horace, and Ovid being read through the lens of laughter; and 3) what are the theories of laughter with which Vergil, Horace, and Ovid may have been familiar. My considerations of these questions, as circumscribed as the scope of an introduction requires them to be, will offer a suitable launching pad for the topics explored in the chapters that follow.

Question 1) Which Words and Why?

The Vocabulary of Laughter and the Risible

The English vocabulary of laughter offers a fitting parallel to the vocabulary of laughter in Greek because, for both languages, laughter only tells half of the story. One can refer to cackles, snickers, chuckles, chortles, yuks, and guffaws without making any mention of smiling, sneering, beaming, or grinning. Of the latter grouping of words, the most common term for a facial expression involving movement of the lips is "smiling,"[4] but a smile, when situated amidst the other terms in its semantic cohort, communicates a more precise (i.e., more positive) psychological state than a laugh.[5] English and Greek make use of etymologically distinct terms for smiles and laughs, and yet the behaviors of smiling and laughing (and the corresponding terms in literature) often appear in tandem. Mild amusement may provoke a smile, but an

4 I base this assessment upon the fact that "smile" is the only word that appears in the definitions of all the other words. *OED* s.v. sneer, beam, grin.

5 *OED* s.v. laugh, smile.

increase in amusement may elicit a laugh (with the smile typically remaining apparent). Because the behaviors are linked but still distinct, a smile may linger on the face after an outburst of laughter. The result: "the *visual* impressions of laughing and smiling can be thought of as forming a (blurred) continuum."[6]

I mention the following basic Greek terms because they feature in the examination of ancient laughter theories that I offer in the final section of this introduction. The Greek verb for laughing is γελᾶν (from which English receives the word "gelastic"), and just as English utilizes prepositions to differentiate between laughing *with* and laughing *at* someone, Greek attaches prepositional prefixes to γελᾶν in order to indicate the nature of the laughter being described. To laugh approvingly is ἐπιγελᾶν, to laugh scornfully is καταγελᾶν or διαγελᾶν. The unprefixed Greek γελᾶν ultimately does not specify good-natured laughter, derisive laughter, or any other type of laughter on its own. Just laughter.[7] Consequently, when γελᾶν appears in a literary work, an examination of its context is necessary if one wishes to determine the disposition of the character laughing or of the individual observing the laughter.

Similarly the word μειδιᾶν is used for a physical act of smiling, but the attitude of the "smiler" (good-natured or otherwise) is not reliably communicated by the word alone, nor do prefixes help as much with μειδιᾶν as they do with γελᾶν. For example, the ἐπι- prefix that softens γελᾶν does nothing so consistent with μειδιᾶν, and ἐπιμειδᾶν can indicate approval as well as scorn.[8] As with unmarked literary laughter, the context of a literary smile typically provides important clues as to what psychological state the textual smile indicates.[9]

---

6 Halliwell (2008) 520, (his emphasis and parentheses).

7 The noun γέλως and the verb γελᾶν have similar semantic ranges. The adjective γελοῖον is examined in the discussion of the laughter theories in Plato and Aristotle.

8 LSJ s.v. ἐπιμειδάω.

9 There is a larger vocabulary for laughter, smiling, and the risible in Greek, but it does not feature in the following discussion. See Arnould (1990) 287 for the index of her terms for laughter and crying.

The fact that Greek employs etymologically unrelated terms for laughter and smiling may not be remarkable to English speakers for whom this is also the case, but it would likely attract the attention of a native speaker of Spanish (reírse vs. sonreírse), French (rire vs. sourire), or Italian (ridere vs. sorridere). Likewise in Latin, the words for laughing and smiling operate on an unmistakable literary continuum as well as a behavioral one. It is for this reason that I collapse both of these concepts and their corresponding terms into the vocabulary of explicit laughter in Augustan literature.

The Latin verbs that indicate the act of laughing are *ridere* and *cachinnare. Ridere* is the unmarked term for laughter, and *cachinnare* marks loud, immoderate, or derisive laughter.[10] Their corresponding nouns are *risus* and *cachinnus. Ridere* is often prefixed with prepositions to specify the "direction" (and a coordinate change in "type") of laughter, e.g., *deridere* = to laugh "down," scorn;[11] *arridere* = to laugh "at" (in an approving manner); *irridere* = to laugh "against" (in ridicule).[12] Thus *ridere* behaves much like the Greek term γελᾶν and the English "laugh." All three terms similarly communicate plain laughter, in all its ambiguity. The similarities break down, however, when one considers that the verb *ridere*, unprefixed though it may be, is sometimes thought to indicate smiling, in which case the potential semantic range of the one term would double in size, with the same verb being used for vocalizations and unvoiced facial expressions.[13] The Greek differentiation between smiling (μειδιᾶν) and laughing (γελᾶν)—both

10 *OLD* s.v. *rideo* and *cachinno.* See also the *Commentum Cornuti* on Persius 1.12 (15): *cachinnus autem est risus lasciuior cum uoce.*

11 A detailed treatment of *derideo* (vs. *rideo*) appears in the first section of Chapter 3.

12 *Ridere* also seems to acquire different meanings—to "distribute itself" differently—through the case that it takes: *ridere* + accusative can mean "to laugh at" while *ridere* + dative maps a favorable sense onto the laughter, along the lines of "to laugh for" (e.g., the sea's laughter *for* Venus in Book 1 of Lucretius' proem to *De Rerum Natura*: *tibi rident aequora ponti* (v. 8)). Henry (1878) states the difference more cautiously in his note on *Aen.* 4.128: "[T]he object which is smiled at in the bad sense, *i.e.*, which is derided, is invariably not put in the dative, but in the accusative" (628). He does not conclude that all occasions of *ridere* + accusative convey derision.

13 *OLD* s.v. *rideo* 2 and 3. One of the often cited passages of *ridere* meaning "to smile" is Catullus c. 61.212, but I see no reason that the mention of the child's mouth (*semihiante labello* in v. 213) precludes a vocalization of laughter.

of which terms an educated Roman would know—would seem a thing of the distant past. Granted, this would only make for confusion on the verbal level. Whether *ridere* was meant to indicate a laugh or a smile would be easily clarified by the context in which the verb appeared.

My use of the modal verb "would" throughout the previous sentences betrays my resistance to reading *ridere* as indicating a smile; a prefixed form of this verb (i.e., *subridere* = to "under" laugh = to smile) adequately accounts for this semantic territory.[14] Therefore, my default interpretation of the unprefixed *ridere* is as an audible expression—a laugh.[15] Yet the literal presence of laughter (*ridere*) in the Latin word for smiling leads me to include *subridere* among the prefixed words for laughter mentioned previously. These four terms—*ridere*, *cachinnare*, *risus*, and *cachinnus*—in their unprefixed and prefixed forms comprise the vocabulary of explicit laughter by which I conduct my examination of laughter in Augustan literature.

The vocabulary of the risible includes words etymologically related to the vocabulary of the explicit laughter (such as *ridiculus*[16]) as well as words that have a similar semantic range. These words are *iocus* (*iocosus*), *dicax*, and *sal* (*salsus*), all of which have lexical meanings proximate to wit, jokes, and/or playfulness.[17] Additional terms invaluable to an understanding of literary aesthetics in the age of Augustus, such as *facetus*, *lepidus*, and, as I argue in the case of Vergil's *Eclogues*, *ludus*, occasionally appear in the context of laughter in Augustan poetry, but

14 *OLD* s.v. *subrideo*.

15 See Varro, *Menippean Satire* fr. 277 (from the *Marcipor*) where, following Astbury's printed text (which aligns with Cebè's for the crucial section *hiantis* to *audio*), the laughter is clearly meant to be audible: *quid? qui uident et circumstant, non rident? – credo ridere: hiantis uideo, ridentis non audio.* (Cebè suggested text is *quicquid est, rident et circumstant. – Non rident. – Credo ridere – Hiantis uideo, ridentis non audio.*) See also the reference to the Persius scholia in n. 10 above, where the use of *uoce* implies that both *risus* and *cachinnus* involve vocalization, though I believe that *risus* is more exclusive to laughter than the verb form *ridere*.

16 *OLD* s.v. *ridiculus*.

17 These words have been gathered from their frequent appearance alongside *ridere* and *ridicula* (and other terms for the risible) in *De oratore* 2.216-290 and in the specific Vergilian, Horatian, and Ovidian texts I study in the chapters to follow. Cicero's vocabulary of laughter and the risible is not coterminous with the vocabulary employed by Vergil, Horace, and Ovid, in part because the glossary of terms available to an author composing in prose is larger than what can be accommodated in Augustan hexameter and elegiac couplets. But metrics alone are not an adequate explanation; Cicero never uses the hexametrically-viable *cachinnare* in his *excursus de ridiculis*.

these words maintain a greater semantic distance from laughter and the risible and are only considered on select occasions.[18] The vocabulary of the risible is considered at length only in contexts where explicit laughter appears.

Question 2) Why these Authors? And why Laughter?

Explanation of a Method

Even with this restricted lexicon (as compared to the numerous terms for laughing, snickering, chuckling, chortling, and guffawing in English), the contexts in which laughter appears in the poems of Vergil, Horace, and Ovid are as varied as the contexts in which people laugh in the 21st century. But a "live" laugh, experienced firsthand, may be accompanied by non-verbal or situational cues that aid in its interpretation. With literary laughter, a reader has only the text to interrogate as she attempts to answer the question of why laughter appears and to construct or deconstruct a narrative that accounts for the laugh. The question itself and the discovery (or creation) of an answer allow the reader to enter into dialogue with the text, to respond to it, and to investigate the background and interactions of the participants, be they author, speaker, addressee, character, or even the implied reader. Is the reader meant to be included in this laughter? Is the laughter appropriate? Is it deliberately ambiguous? If so, what does this ambiguous behavior contribute to the literary work? In short, a textual laugh is a thread the reader can tug upon to unravel the text and examine various elements of its composition.

By restricting my inquiry in the chapters that follow to passages in Augustan poetry where terms for laughter appear, I do away with the potential challenge of guessing when an audience laughed. I likewise skirt the subjective and slippery analysis of "humor." I instead focus on selections in which laughter is textually witnessed or, by way of terms for the risible, strongly

18 Krostenko (2002) groups these and several other terms (e.g., *uenustus* and *bellus*) into the "Language of Social Performance."

implied. With these passages as my starting point, I attempt to reconstruct explanations for specific occasions of laughter and to explore how an author's deployment of laughter within a literary work offers potential answers to various questions of reader response and generic identity. My reasons for selecting these two paths of inquiry are explained in greater detail in the introductions to the two halves of the study ("Chapters 1-3: *Ridere* Response" and "Chapters 4-6: Jocular Genres").

Vergil, Horace, and Ovid have attracted the attention and admiration of readers for as long as their works have been known and are important contributors to the Western literary tradition. I am far from alone in regarding their poetic works as varied manifestations of mastery. Each work, book, verse, and word—and, similarly, every appearance of a term for laughter—appears to have been carefully weighed by its original author and has, in the years since its original composition, been weighed in turn by innumerable scholars. Consequently, the Augustan age is home to much of the most thoroughly researched and published-upon Latin literature from antiquity and presents a distinct challenge to any scholar who wishes to break new ground while researching the literature of this time period.

I have selected laughter as the focus of my study, in part, because no one has studied textual laughter (by way of the vocabulary of laughter and the risible) as an inroad to considerations of reader response and genre in the poetry of these authors. Indeed, there exists no comprehensive work on laughter in Latin literature as a whole. A sustained treatment of laughter in the ancient world was altogether lacking until Stephen Halliwell's *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* was published in 2008. This work expertly examines occasions of laughter in Greek literature through the lens of specific authors and genres and explores laughter's ability to illuminate elements of Greek culture. Its only shortcoming (if it can be considered as such) is that it does not—and, of course, could not—treat

every occasion of laughter in the literature of his designated time periods (e.g., elegy and pastoral receive no dedicated attention).

Erich Segal's *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus* (1967) is not about laughter itself but about Plautine comedy. In fact, an indistinct line between the topics of laughter, humor, and comedy has led to the publication of numerous books and articles with "laughter" in their titles but with content focused elsewhere. Studies of laughter in articles and (portions of) monographs nevertheless offer important interpretations of specific occasions of laughter as well as valuable methodological models. Dominique Arnould's *Le rire et les larmes dans la littérature grecque d'Homère à Platon* (1990) examines laughter's significance in the literature of a specific time period, and she focuses upon a specific vocabulary.[19] As her title indicates, she also examines tears and crying, and she draws numerous parallels between the two behaviors. The collection *Le rire des anciens* (1998) contains contributions on Greek and Latin texts, but treatments of laughter occasionally blur into treatments of comedy or humor. *Le rire des Grecs: anthropologie du rire en Gréce ancienne* (2000) is far more faithful to its titular claim of examining laughter, but the vast majority of the contributions treat Greek texts and culture. *Sardonic Smile: Nonverbal Behavior in Homeric Epic* (1995) by Donald Lateiner explores the large volume of information communicated about characters through descriptions of physical bodies. Daniel Levine's articles from the mid-1980's on laughter in the *Odyssey* examine laughter's role in characterization and narrative. On topics in Latin literature, Anthony Corbeill's *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic* (1996) deftly explores political humor and invective (primarily *via* Cicero) in the Late Republic but, like Segal, pays little heed to laughter itself. Brian Krostenko's *Cicero, Catullus, and the Language of Social Performance* (2001) proposes that a specific set of lexemes, some of which overlap with the vocabulary of

19 Arnould (1990) 138-142, 158-164, and 287.

laughter, were used to evaluate style and wit in the late Republic and examines their function in works by Cicero and Catullus. *The Function of Humour in Roman Verse Satire: Laughter and Lying* (2006) by Maria Plaza makes a compelling case for humor's centrality to Roman verse satire, although she, like many other scholars, frequently uses humor and laughter interchangeably. However, her doctoral dissertation *Laughter and Derision in Petronius' Satyrica: A Literary Study* (2000) employs a "linear close reading of all passages that contain explicit mention of laughter and derision" that shares methodological territory with my own study.[20]

Embedded in portions of the aforementioned works are important observations and theories about the function of laughter (and humor) in Greek and Latin literature, but treatments of explicit laughter in works by Roman authors are a considerable minority in an already small population. My study is intended to begin to remedy the dearth of research on this topic. I utilize close readings of Latin texts from the restricted time period of the Augustan era with an eye toward accounting for the function and significance of laughter in these texts.

Some of my reasons for picking these authors and texts will hopefully become more clear as the study progresses. The reasons I note presently are both practical and self-serving. From a practical standpoint, it would be difficult—although not impossible—to examine the role of laughter in texts that lack laughter. The Augustan era presents readers with an abundance of works composed in "low" genres to which, as the following exploration of laughter theories in Plato and Aristotle suggests, laughter and the laughable were considered particularly appropriate.[21] Additionally, Vergil, Horace, and Ovid, by nature of their multigeneric corpora, are

20 Plaza (2000) outlines her method in her *Abstract* (from which this quotation is drawn) and *Introduction*, p. 3.

21 On Aristotle, see, e.g., Grant (1924) 25: "To a philosopher, then, who did not regard pleasure as the highest good, laughter and the types of literature whose purpose it is to excite laughter, could not be regarded as worthy of as much consideration as more serious things." She later places iambic, comedy, mime, satyr dramas, and philosophical diatribe/dialogue at the bottom of the totem pole (40). Volk (2010) 40 sets the "high" genres of epic, tragedy, and panegyric against the "low" of bucolic and elegy.

of particular interest in exploring possible answers to comparative questions about genre. As for the self-serving component to my selection, I have chosen to explore many of the works that I most enjoy reading . . . and rereading. Vergil, Horace, and Ovid reward both of these activities, but demand the latter.

My interest in literary laughter, however, is not exclusive to the works of Vergil, Horace, and Ovid, nor is it reserved solely for works of ancient literature. The study of a laugh in a literary text offers unique insight into the specific text and into the very experience of reading, inviting readers, as I argue in the pages to follow, to interact with the text in subtle and perhaps even reflexive ways. I am fascinated by laughter in all its inexplicable and infectious glory, and to the extent that it is often considered a universally and uniquely human attribute, I believe that laughter proves itself a valuable point of contact with the ancient world.

Question 3) How Did the Ancients Think About Laughter?

Laughter Theories in Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero

In contrast to my reluctance (and inability) to propose a unified theory of laughter, there have been many authors and scholars for whom laughter has been a behavior warranting examination and explanation. The earliest of the inquiries from Classical antiquity materialize in selected works of Plato and Aristotle, yet even these accounts of laughter and the laughable appear as concentrated explorations situated in broader discussions, much like the account of laughter's oratorical function in *De oratore*. None of these ancient "theories" appears in a work with a title such as "On Laughter" or "Concerning the Nature of the Ridiculous," and yet works with such a specific focus seem to have existed, if we are to believe *De oratore*'s Caesar Strabo. At the dramatic date of the dialogue in 91 BCE (and presumably at the time of the work's composition in 55 BCE), these works were associated with Greek authorship: "And so when I

saw certain Greek books written about the laughable, I arrived at a certain hope that I would be able to learn something from these."[22]

Alas, no such works survive. Caesar, acting as the primary spokesperson in Cicero's exploration of laughter, suggests that their value was limited anyway. After recognizing certain Greeks for their remarkable wit, he offers a blunt critique: "As for those who have tried to hand down an account of this thing [sc. the laughable], they have appeared so manifestly witless that nothing of theirs is laugh-worthy except their witlessness itself."[23] For our part, we modern readers must content ourselves with purple (laughter)-passages from Plato's *Republic*, *Philebus*, and *Laws* and from Aristotle's *Poetics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Nicomachean Ethics.* Before the passages from these works are examined in greater detail, it must be pointed out that even though Plato is credited with offering the first "theory" of laughter, laughter certainly had not gone altogether unexamined before Plato put pen to papyrus. As Steven Halliwell's monograph dedicated to Greek laughter demonstrates, there is ample material worthy of discussion in the "literary laughter" that appears in the centuries before Plato and Aristotle.[24] Several particularly rich occasions of literary laughter will make appearances in the chapters that follow because of their lasting influence on retellings in Latin literature.

For the present, however, a distinction is drawn between explicit analyses of laughter and implied ones. In the following summary of several influential accounts of laughter, the theories examined are those that were articulated *before* Vergil, Horace, and Ovid composed their verse: those of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. This "chronological prejudice" is observed for a combination of practical and theoretical reasons. On the practical front, there are so many studies

22 *De or.* 2.217: *itaque cum quosdam Graecos inscriptos libros esse uidissem de ridiculis, non nullam in spem ueneram posse me ex eis aliquid discere*.

23 *De or.* 2.217: *inueni autem ridicula et salsa multa Graecorum; nam et Siculi in eo genere et Rhodii et Byzantii et praeter ceteros Attici excellunt; sed qui eius rei rationem quandam conati sunt artemque tradere, sic insulsi exstiterunt, ut nihil aliud eorum nisi ipsa insulsitas rideatur*.

24 Halliwell (2008).

of laughter from so many fields that treating each study individually (not to say exhaustively) would constitute a lengthy project in itself. The most recent psychological, neuroscientific, and evolutionary explorations of the phenomenon of laughter and smiling would require voracious study if only to acquire an elementary understanding of the theories, let alone the situating of these theories in the fields from which they hail. A 2009 article on laughter and other "nonverbal emotional vocalizations" is a mere four journal pages in length but cites thirty-two references—twenty-four of them published in the preceding nine years or "in press" at the time of publication.[25] Another recent (2010) article that proposes a new theory of smile recognition (and contains responses from other scholars) cites well over 500 works in its list of references, with many of these published since 2000.[26] Thus a practical reason for not pursuing a comprehensive survey of laughter-explanations is that doing so would take me far afield from my intended avenue of exploration.

A theoretical reason for treating ancient explanations of laughter at greater length than recent ones is that ancient accounts of laughter remain tremendously influential. The theories of laughter offered by and often attributed to Hobbes, Freud, and Kant echo core elements of ancient theories and demonstrate that certain arguments from the ancient world had the power to persuade, no matter the time-period. In most modern theories, arguments from the ancient authors have been rearticulated or condensed, strengthened or simply stated more plainly, such that the latent power of the original arguments is all the more apparent.[27] This is not to assert that modern theorists have conceived of nothing new when it comes to thinking critically about laughter but to argue that many of the most compelling observations on laughter had already been voiced by the time Vergil, Horace, and Ovid composed their poems.

25 Sauter (2010).
26 Niedenthal et al. (2010).
27 The reappearance of these theories is also undoubtedly evidence of the education these scholars received.

Lest I overplay my "ancient aces" (a not-uncommon tendency among those who study the ancient world), I believe the modern theories of laughter proposed since antiquity and before the scientific "boom" in laughter research of this past quarter-century are important not only for their distillation of ancient ideas but also for their organization and systematization of something akin to a field of "laughter study." The classification and consolidation of theories offered by various scholars over the past several centuries proves invaluable to discussions of laughter insofar as it provides a shorthand for referring to trends in laughter research rather than to individual scholarly arguments and minute refinements of prior theories. Three particular trends have come to dictate much of the vocabulary employed in scholarly discussions of laughter and humor, especially in studies of literature and the social sciences. Consequently, these trends have assumed the status of "canonical theories" of laughter.

The theories can be summarized as follows: 1) the *superiority theory* urges that we laugh at what is bad or what is "below" us; (2) the *incongruity theory* is based upon the idea that we laugh when we become aware of incongruity between two or more things (one of which is often our own expectations); and (3) the *relief theory* treats laughter as a release from emotional, psychological, or even physical tension.[28] Versions of these theories in the early stages have been observed in the laughter-related writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. Despite the extensive pedigree of these canonical theories of laughter, most people—scholars of laughter and everyday "laughers" alike—would agree that no one of the theories adequately accounts for all of the diverse occasions of laughter.[29] In the end, human beings laugh in response to too many different stimuli for a single psychological state to offer a satisfactory explanation of laughter as a behavior.

28 See Monro (1951) for a summary and critique of these theories in their various instantiations.

29 Morreall (1982) summarizes the specific inadequacies of each theory when it is accepted as a singular explanation. The theory he proposes has other inadequacies.

Should you ask an individual to explain why humans laugh or to define "the laughable", you would be lucky to receive a response consistent unto itself—even if the individual whom you asked was Plato, Aristotle, or Cicero. As I examine the theoretical treatments of laughter set forth by these authors in the following section, I draw attention to the variability in their explanations of laughter and the laughable as an illustration of the puzzling complexity of the behavior of laughter.

3.1 Plato's Scattered Laughs

Laughter surfaces on a number of occasions in the Platonic corpus. The passages treated in the following pages are not simple occurrences of laughter (of which there are many) in the dialogues but explicit discussions of the phenomenon of laughter (of which there are fewer) among the dialogues' participants.[30] In the course of these discussions, certain theoretical explanations of laughter and the laughable are advanced by various figures. As always, the dialogic nature of Plato's work precludes the possibility of ever declaring that "Plato the philosopher" adopts a specific stance on laughter, but the perspectives on laughter that his texts present need only be considered on their own merits. Any discussion of laughter offered in a Platonic text is valuable precisely for the fact that it offers what may have been a contemporary attitude toward laughter.

Socrates' remarks on laughter in Book 3 of the *Republic* (388e5-9) do not amount to a delibrate and comprehensive theory, but they offer an early sampling of resistance to certain types of laughter:

> Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ φιλογέλωτάς γε δεῖ εἶναι. σχεδὸν γὰρ ὅταν τις ἐφιῇ ἰσχυρῷ γέλωτι, ἰσχυρὰν καὶ μεταβολὴν ζητεῖ τὸ τοιοῦτον.
> Δοκεῖ μοι, ἔφη.

30 Halliwell (2008) 276-302 offers a thorough exploration of Socratic laughter through Plato's ambivalent treatment of it in various dialogues, arguing that "we should view with strong scepticism any claim to identify a one-dimensional Platonic verdict on laughter" (277-8).

Οὔτε ἄρα ἀνθρώπους ἀξίους λόγου κρατουμένους ὑπὸ γέλωτος ἄν τις ποιῇ, ἀποδεκτέον, πολὺ δὲ ἧττον, ἐὰν θεούς.
Πολὺ μέντοι, ἦ δ' ὅς. (*Resp.*. 388e5-9)

"But they [the guardians] must not be laughter-lovers. For it seems that whenever someone succumbs to strong laughter, such a thing requires a strong change."
"I agree," he [Adeimantus] said.
"Nor, if someone should portray men of note being overcome by laughter, should it be acceptable. And much less so, if he should portray gods in such a way."
And he said, "Certainly."

In his interchange with Adeimantus, Socrates does not prohibit the guardians from all laughter but from excessive indulgence in laughter, or "laughter loving" (φιλογέλωτάς in 388e5). His focus is on "strong laughter" that brings about a "strong change," and to illustrate his point, he cites a Homeric occasion of "unquenchable laughter" (ἄσβεστος . . . γέλως) that is said to overwhelm the gods in *Iliad* 1.599.

The argument is not against laughter *per se* but against laughter of a certain unbridled type. Other types of laughter are implicitly acceptable, if not demanded. In his prohibition on literary lamentation in the section immediately preceding the discussion of laughter, Socrates uses a compound of γελάω to suggest that the guardians should scorn (καταγελῷεν in 388d3) excessive mourning.[31] There, laughter functions as a desirable tool of social correction, or, at the least, as a readily-acknowledged public display of disapproval.[32]

The "strong change" to which Socrates refers in 388e6 is a psychological rather than a physical one.[33] Socrates here makes no mention of the physiological changes brought on by laughter; he is concerned with loss of self-control, not breath-control. That Socrates treats

31 *Resp.* 388d2-7: δεῖ γάρ, ὦ φίλε Ἀδείμαντε, τὰ τοιαῦτα ἡμῖν οἱ νέοι σπουδῇ ἀκούοιεν καὶ μὴ καταγελῷεν ὡς ἀναξίως λεγομένων, σχολῇ ἂν ἑαυτόν γέ τις ἄνθρωπον ὄντα ἀνάξιον ἡγήσαιτο τούτων καὶ ἐπιπλήξειεν, εἰ καὶ ἐπίοι αὐτῷ τι τοιοῦτον ἢ λέγειν ἢ ποιεῖν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲν αἰσχυνόμενος οὐδὲ καρτερῶν πολλοὺς ἐπὶ σμικροῖσιν παθήμασιν θρήνους ἂν ᾄδοι καὶ ὀδυρμούς.

32 Halliwell (2008) seems to subscribe to the interpretation of καταγελῷεν as corrective tool when he paraphrases the argument as follows: "Ideally [. . .] the young Guardians would know how to use ridicule against targets that deserved their scorn, but would avoid gratuitous, addictive laughter in their own behavior" (301).

33 There is another reference to "strong change" (μεταβολὴ ἰσχυρὰ) in the *Republic* at 553d8, this time in the context of the psychological change of a young man from being a lover of honor to being a lover of money.

examines excessive tears immediately before he examines excessive laughter is no coincidence. Just as public lamentation is a loss of self-control with psychological resonance and sociological ramifications, so too is "strong laughter"; the physical behavior represents a psychological state.[34] Socrates' argument is noteworthy precisely because it treats laughter as a behavior that can be separated from comedy and from humor. In treating laughter as the product of a psychological experience, Plato's Socrates lays the groundwork for further theorizing of the psychological elements of this physical behavior.[35] The argument also draws attention to the "social" aspect of laughter—the fact that laughter often occurs in a public sphere (real or literary) and warrants policing.

A more explicit engagement with laughter's social function arises in two passages near the beginning of Book 5 of the *Republic* (452d3-e2 and 457a10-b5):

Resp. 457a10-b5:[36]

> ὁ δὲ γελῶν ἀνὴρ ἐπὶ γυμναῖς γυναιξί, τοῦ βελτίστου ἕνεκα γυμναζομέναις, ἀτελῆ τοῦ γελοίου σοφίας δρέπων καρπόν, οὐδὲν οἶδεν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐφ' ᾧ γελᾷ οὐδ' ὅτι πράττει· κάλλιστα γὰρ δὴ τοῦτο καὶ λέγεται καὶ λελέξεται, ὅτι τὸ μὲν ὠφέλιμον καλόν, τὸ δὲ βλαβερὸν αἰσχρόν.
>
> But the man laughing at women who, for the best reason, train naked, "plucking an unripe fruit of wisdom of ridiculousness," doesn't know, as it seems, what he laughs at or what he's doing. For indeed it is said—and will have been said—most beautifully, that the beneficial is beautiful, but the harmful is base.

34 In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Demeter is said to "turn" (ἐτρέψατο in 203) in an example of a pronounced psychological change that is brought on by laughter. This passage is treated briefly in Chapter 5.

35 Plato offers another version of this discussion toward the end of the *Republic* (605c-606c), where he goes into greater detail about the effects of representations of grief and humor (he focuses on both poetic and theatrical representations). Socrates grants that representations of sadness or the ridiculous may offer a certain pleasure to the "perceiver" (viewer/listener), but stresses that they simultaneously weaken the perceiver's resistance to these behaviors, making it more likely that he will indulge in behavior in his own life similar to that represented. As my own choice of terms indicates, Socrates does not draw firm distinctions between his vocabulary for humor, laughter, and comedy (e.g, γέλοιος in 606c2 and κωμῳδικός in 606c3). Moreover, his point is primarily about the risks of mimetic presentation; he takes it for granted that laughter at "shameful" things is undesirable. The unique components of this argument (as compared to the one at 388e, discussed above) are the references to "laughter-making" (γελωτοποιεῖν in 606c6) and "buffoonery" (βωμολοχία in 606c7) as well as the conclusion that giving free rein to laughter on individual occasions has a tendency to become a habitual tendency.

36 I adopt the text in Halliwell (1993) 62-64. The Greek phrase that is translated in quotes is an adapted fragment of Pindar (fr. 209 Schroeder).

Resp. 452d3-e2:

> Ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ οἶμαι χρωμένοις ἄμεινον τὸ ἀποδύεσθαι τοῦ συγκαλύπτειν πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐφάνη, καὶ τὸ ἐν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς δὴ γελοῖον ἐξερρύη ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις μηνυθέντος ἀρίστου· καὶ τοῦτο ἐνεδείξατο, ὅτι μάταιος ὃς γελοῖον ἄλλο τι ἡγεῖται ἢ τὸ κακόν, καὶ ὁ γελωτοποιεῖν ἐπιχειρῶν πρὸς ἄλλην τινὰ ὄψιν ἀποβλέπων ὡς γελοίου ἢ τὴν τοῦ ἄφρονός τε καὶ κακοῦ, καὶ καλοῦ αὖ σπουδάζει πρὸς ἄλλον τινὰ σκοπὸν στησάμενος ἢ τὸν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ.
>
> But since, as I see it, all these sorts of things made it clear to those taking part that stripping off clothes was better than staying covered, what was laughable then before the eyes fell away because the best thing was made known by way of explanations; and this proved that the man who considers something other than badness to be laughable is a fool, as is the man who attempts to arouse laughter by looking toward some aspect of the laughable other than an aspect of foolishness or badness, and so again is the man who gives serious attention to setting up some other standard of beauty than one of good.

In the course of his conversation with Glaucon, Socrates argues that what is generally considered "laughable" is in large part a function of acculturation or a product of incorrect judgments, while what is properly laughable should be restricted to what is actually bad (κακόν) or senseless (ἄφρον). In some respects, Socrates' position against laughter and the laughable in this discussion with Glaucon seems much less tolerant of laughter than the one he takes in his discussion with Adeimantus in Book 3. Occasions for laughter have been restricted to occasions of ridicule.

The Greek γελοῖον, as Socrates uses it, reflects the same ambiguity as the English terms one would use to translate it: the laughable, the ridiculous, the risible.[37] The adjective γελοῖον is etymologically inextricable from laughter, but that which is "laughable" or "ridiculous" does not, strictly speaking, require the action of laughing (as would be expressed by a verb) or an

37 The first two of these English words ("laughable" and "ridiculous") have a dismissive or derisive connotation. Consider the fact that something designated "laughable" could often be called "scoff-able," and something "ridiculous" is often "preposterous." The most neutral adjective for describing laughter is probably the Greek-derived "gelastic." This allows one to describe something that entails laughter without dictating the valence of the laughter. The act of calling something laughable does not necessarily effect or enact laughter, but the act of calling something ridiculous does, in some sense, manifest the ridicule that is latent in the term. I believe that this reflects the fact that "ridiculous" in English has acquired a lexical significance that is considerably more distant from laughter than the term "laughable."

occurrence of laughter (expressed by a noun). What is γελοῖον is a worthy *object of* laughter, where the object is what is laughed *at* or ridiculed. Plato's Socrates asserts that an individual who is best-informed by reason (τοῦ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις μηνυθέντος ἀρίστου in 452d5-6) will know that only what is truly bad should be ridiculed. The laughable or ridiculous is ideologically severed from an actual occasion of laughter.[38] But the term γελοῖον as it appears in Book 5 of the *Republic* does not *require* laughter.

There is a flip-side to this semantic rift: something that prompts laughter is not, by Socrates' reckoning, necessarily "laughable." In his summary of the "Pro-Nude-Female-Guardians-Training" argument at 457a10-b5, Socrates imagines a person who laughs at the women who exercise nude. The "laughing man," however, laughs at something that is not actually "γελοῖον," and thereby he demonstrates ignorance of his own actions. A baby who giggles and leads those around her to laugh is neither morally bad nor foolish in some censurable way. Thus she would not be γελοῖον under Socrates' interpretation, even though laughter is manifest throughout such a hypothetical scenario. The definition of γελοῖον, restricted though it may be, allows room for laughter precisely because laughter can exist independent of what is laughable.

The semantic range of γελοῖον has thus been restricted in Plato to a specific class of morally unsound stimuli. Socrates suggests that the term γελοῖον is properly applied only to that which is κακόν or ἄφρον, but he does not pretend that these terms are all synonymous. There are presumably bad things that are not "laughable"—things that are more severe, more abhorrent,

38 Of course, the laughable and laughter are *not* mutually-exclusive. A person could laugh at something that fits Socrates' definition of the ridiculous. The aspiring "laughter-maker" in 452d7 (ὁ γελωτοποιεῖν ἐπιχειρῶν) is surely attempting to provoke a laugh and not merely to identify what is ridiculous. Nightingale (1995) 176-8 overstates her point when she says of this passage that "Socrates explicitly criticizes comic poets for dispensing ridicule in a fashion that is ignorant and contrary to truth." With the exception of the use of κωμῳδεῖν in 452d1 (which I believe to be more figurative than literal), there is no mention of poetry or written/stage composition. Socrates' point includes comedy but is not restricted to it.

and in need of more serious censure. The labeling of something as "laughable" does not indicate that laughter occurred; it simply suggests that laughter of some type would be a fitting response.[39] Whatever the "lexical drift" that distanced τὸ γελοῖον from ὁ γέλως, laughter must have been "present" to an ancient reader in both written words, much like "laughable" can hardly be spoken or read by a native English-speaker without calling to mind the word "laugh." Socrates' use of γελοῖον in Book 5 of the *Republic* confirms a conceptualization of laughter introduced in Book 3 as a psychologically demonstrative behavior.

Throughout the *Republic*, Socrates presents laughter as a socially-influential behavior that is inseparable from an individual's psychological motivation. His designation of something as properly "laughable" requires a moralizing association with laughter, while that which is incorrectly cast as "laughable" reflects subjective appearances and cultural relativity rather than reasoned thought. The man who is imagined laughing at the female guardians as they train in the nude nicely summarizes Plato's engagement with laughter and the laughable in the *Republic*: that man's laughter is a judgment. His judgment, however, is incorrect. He laughs at something that he thinks is laughable, but because the training of the female guardians *is* an intellectually sound idea and *is not* morally reprehensible, he laughs ignorantly. To anticipate the direction that Plato's considerations of laughter take in his other works, this confused man becomes an object of derision himself—an embodiment of the laughable. The *Philebus* involves Socrates in a discussion in which he attempts to tackle head-on a definition of the laughable—τὸ γελοῖον.

In *Philebus* 48c8-d3 Socrates presents an initial definition of τὸ γελοῖον in which he states that the laughable is πονηρία . . . τις—"some kind of vice." The laughable person embodies the vice of self-ignorance. The term πονηρία echoes the ethically-charged treatment of

39 The flip-side here does not hold true: all designations of something as laughable may, under the Platonic reading, be a manifestation of censure, but not all occasions of laughter must entail censure.

τὸ γελοῖον in Book 5 of the *Republic* where to be considered laughable is to exhibit a moral deficiency of some sort (*Resp.* 452d3-e2, see above). Such moralizing language stacks the cards against any positive rendering of the laughable. Ignorance is κακόν, or a "bad thing" (as Socrates gets Protarchus to acknowledge on at least three separate occasions: 48c2, 49a5-6, and 49e7-8), and the laughable person is ignorant (48c8-d3). Plato's Socrates is consistent across dialogues in his treatment of the laughable as a state that no one would willingly seek out.[40]

The outlook on γελᾶν (vs. τὸ γελοῖον) in the *Philebus* is different. After Socrates and Protarchus (re)establish that ignorance is a bad thing (49e7-8), Socrates asks, "And are we pleased or distressed whenever we laugh at it?" (Χαίρομεν δὲ ἢ λυπούμεθα, ὅταν ἐπ' αὐτῇ γελῶμεν;). This is the first appearance of a finite verb form of γελᾶν in the discussion,[41] and Protarchus' confident reply ("It is clear that we are pleased") plays a pivotal role in Socrates' conclusion that there is a mixture of pleasure and pain in comedies. This is because in the remainder of the conversation, laughter (γελᾶν) is treated as a manifestation of pleasure (ἡδονή).

Socrates' and Protarchus' agreement in *Philebus* 49e7-8 that laughter is a "pleasure,"

---

40 Socrates immediately acknowledges that another factor in his definition of the laughable entails an individual's ability to retaliate to laughter. In the following passage, the people being discussed are those who lack knowledge of themselves:

> Ταύτῃ τοίνυν δίελε, καὶ ὅσοι μὲν αὐτῶν εἰσι μετ' ἀσθενείας τοιοῦτοι καὶ ἀδύνατοι καταγελώμενοι τιμωρεῖσθαι, γελοίους τούτους φάσκων εἶναι τἀληθῆ φθέγξῃ· τοὺς δὲ δυνατοὺς τιμωρεῖσθαι καὶ ἰσχυροὺς φοβεροὺς καὶ ἐχθροὺς προσαγορεύων ὀρθότατον τούτων σαυτῷ λόγον ἀποδώσεις. ἄγνοια γὰρ ἡ μὲν τῶν ἰσχυρῶν ἐχθρά τε καὶ αἰσχρά— βλαβερὰ γὰρ καὶ τοῖς πέλας αὐτή τε καὶ ὅσαι εἰκόνες αὐτῆς εἰσιν – ἡ δ' ἀσθενὴς ἡμῖν τὴν τῶν γελοίων εἴληχε τάξιν τε καὶ φύσιν. (*Phlb*. 49b6-c5)
>
> ---
>
> Now make the division in this way: as many of them as are weak and, upon being laughed-down, unable to avenge themselves, if you say these man are laughable, you will speak truly; but those who are able to avenge themselves and are strong, if you call these men terrible and hateful, you will be giving yourself the truest reckoning of them. Ignorance in strong men is hateful and shameful—it and also the phantoms of it are harmful to one's neighbors—but for us, weak ignorance has obtained the place and class of the laughable.

Despite the rather convoluted syntax of the section, Socrates' proposed definition of a laughable man remains simple: the laughable man is ignorant about his wealth, his physical appearance, or an aspect of his soul, and he is too weak to retaliate against those who laugh at him.

41 The participle καταγελώμενοι appears in *Phlb*. 49b7-8.

especially in the examination of hedonism that the *Philebus* comprises, is remarkable. The conversation with Protarchus is peppered with appearances of the adjective γελοῖον and a handful of inflections of the verb γελᾶν. The terms could easily blend into a general mishmash of laughter and the laughable, but the two words approach laughter from different directions—γελοῖον from the "receiving-end" and γελᾶν from the "laughing-end."And γελοῖον seems to be a bad thing (κακόν), while γελᾶν is a pleasure (ἡδονή). Are these two concepts contradictory? Pleasure is not, by definition, an intrinsic good . . . that is, unless you are speaking with a hedonist. Deliberately or not, Socrates sets up an argument in which the undisputed status of laughter as a "pleasure" raises different questions altogether: how good can γελᾶν really be if τὸ γελοῖον is morally reprehensible?

Socrates' definition of the laughable is the centerpiece of the passage, and it tends to attract the most scholarly attention.[42] The conclusions that some scholars draw from Socrates' definition are mistaken in one particular way: the conflation of τὸ γελοῖον and γελᾶν. For example, Arnould (1990) summarizes Socrates' argument much as I have, but she does not maintain the distinction between laughter and the laughable: "Le rire est une douleur de l'âme, car il traduit une forme de φθόνος et le φθόνος est une λύπη. On rit de quelqu'un (il est γελοῖος, il fait rire), note Socrate dans le *Philèbe*, parce qu'il se croit plus riche, plus beau, plus grand, meilleur, qu'il n'est. Cette ignorance de soi est un mal qui provoque le rire d'autrui si celui qui ignore son mal n'a aucune puissance. Elle devient dangereuse, s'il a du pouvoir."[43] She collapses the two in her parenthetical aside. However, as evidenced in Book 5 of the *Republic* (457a10-b5), laughter and the laughable do not correspond; the terms share the same roots but bear different fruit.

42 Halliwell (2008) 278 summarizes the scholarship that has tackled this passage (and the shortcomings of that scholarship).

43 Arnould (1990) 118.

In Plato's *Laws*, the final Platonic work in which laughter is explicitly theorized, laughter and the laughable are repeatedly treated alongside behaviors that provoke laughter or are designated as laughable, such as comic performances and iambic poetry. Theoretical pronouncements are made, but the practical uses and implications of laughter are again foregrounded. The theoretical discussions of laughter and the laughable in the *Laws* are generally embedded in treatments of those occasions that might "contain" laughter in Plato's world. Similar to the *Philebus*, in which τὸ γελοῖον is associated with stage comedy, the mentions of the laughable in Books 7 and 11 of the *Laws* gravitate toward examinations of the role that "comedy" (broadly construed) is to play in the well-governed city. As a result, the meanings of ὁ γελώς and τὸ γελοῖον and κωμῳδεῖν at certain points in the work seem completely distinct from one another, while at other times they seem to blur together.

In Book 5 (732c1-4), the Athenian discourages immoderate laughter (γελώτων . . . ἐξαισίων) and encourages decorous behavior (εὐσχημονεῖν). The difficulty in interpreting this passage lies in constructing a positive argument when the bulk of the passage functions as a deterrent; the Athenian does not assert that individuals should laugh moderately, but he also does not call for prohibition against all laughter. It seems plausible to state that the Athenian believes laughter to be a pleasant experience that should be enjoyed in moderation. He thus echoes Socrates' uncontested assertion in *Phlb*. 50a7-10 that laughter is a form of pleasure (ἡδονήν),[44] and even though the Athenian's argument is not framed positively, he nevertheless casts laughter in a positive light.

The Athenian offers a similarly equivocal concession in Book 7 (816d3-817d8), this time in reference to the laughable. His initial point is significant: one cannot understand serious

44 There seems to be a correspondence of concepts between the Athenian's discussion of ignorance (732a3-b2), which immediately precedes the discussion of laughter in Book 5, and Socrates' definition of τὸ γελοῖον in the *Philebus* as a form of self-ignorance

matters without laughable ones. Yet this statement is immediately qualified by the argument that follows, only to be eventually overwhelmed in a discussion of comic and tragic theater. The starting point is nonetheless important to the extent that it privileges an intellectual appreciation of τὸ γελοῖον. The question of the *practice* of τὸ γελοῖον is what directs the conversation to a consideration of who will act in comedic performances. The Athenian's arguments that the rendering of laughable things deprives an individual of virtue (816e2-5), and that only slaves and foreigners are to perform comedies—and then only as negative *exempla* (816e5-10)—create for the reader a dog-pile of unfavorable associations (foreigners, slaves, and loss of virtue), and distract from the very concept upon which all of these things are piling: the desirability of knowledge of the laughable. The inclusion of such a discussion of the laughable demonstrates the Athenian's belief in the importance of such knowledge and of its role in the well-governed city.

In Book 11 (934c8-936a5), the Athenian traces a conception of the laughable through such varied terrain as madness, slander, and poetry, although the fluid manner in which he transitions between topics makes the reader unaware of how much ground is being covered. One of the more puzzling passages is the exploration of the crucial role that τὸ γελοῖον plays in slander. The explicit argument regarding τὸ γελοῖον in these passages is that habitual slander *requires* the slanderer to aim for the laughable, much to the detriment of his own character. The implicit argument is more involved: as the Athenian sees the matter, an appeal to the laughable is not, in and of itself, a sufficient "goal" in a slanderous exchange. The man prone to such slander is merely engaging in ridicule, and he fails to advance a constructive argument or substantial indictment of his opponent.[45] For this man, his ridiculous, abusive language comes up short

45 I draw this conclusion from the Athenian's requirement at 934e4-6 that an individual involved in an argument must both teach (διδασκέτω) and learn (μανθανέτω) from his opponent: ὁ δὲ ἀμφισβητῶν ἔν τισι λόγοις ἄλλος ἄλλῳ διδασκέτω καὶ μανθανέτω τόν τε ἀμφισβητοῦντα καὶ τοὺς παρόντας ἀπεχόμενος πάντως τοῦ κακηγορεῖν.

because it becomes its own end. The preferable alternative is that a gesture toward the laughable accomplishes something more than being merely laughable.

Despite this relationship between slander and τὸ γελοῖον, the Athenian paints a more forgiving portrait of the laughable when he collapses it into a broad conception of "comedy." Comic productions as well as iambic and lyric poems of a certain type fall under the same heading, and even though the Athenian uses the verb κωμῳδεῖν to indicate what all of these types of composition do, the terminology he uses before settling on this term has fewer associations with genre. At 935d4-5 the Athenian speaks of τὴν . . . προθυμίαν τοῦ γελοῖα εἰς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους λέγειν—"a zeal for saying laughable things about people." He further subdivides this into the "playful" (παίζειν) and "not playful" (μὴ παίζειν), where the playful is characterized as lacking the undesirable passion of θυμός while still appealing to the laughable: καὶ παίζοντι μὲν ἐξέστω τινὶ περί του λέγειν γελοῖον ἄνευ θυμοῦ (935d6-7). This playful use of the laughable is ultimately permitted to certain poets with certain audiences.

The depiction of τὸ γελοῖον in the *Republic* and the *Philebus* as an altogether bad thing or a manifestation of envy is thus first softened in Book 7 of the *Laws* when the Athenian advocates knowledge of the laughable and allows into his well-governed city renderings of the laughable by slaves in comic performances. But, as discussed above, this appears to be something of a backhanded compliment. In Book 11, τὸ γελοῖον is further softened by the fact that a playful aspect of it is identified and deemed permissible. Far from being stripped of its power by the restrictions imposed upon it, τὸ γελοῖον is made to occupy a more desirable position in Book 11 than anywhere else in the Platonic corpus.

It would be a gross overstatement to assert that laughter and the laughable are reconciled in Plato's *Laws*. The Athenian uses two distinct terms throughout his discussions, and a passage

such as that in Book 5 which attributes a measure of joy to *laughter* is a far cry from the suggestion that renderings of the *laughable* are inconsistent with a virtuous life, as appears in Book 7. Nevertheless, γελᾶν and τὸ γελοῖον are seen to share some common ground in the *Laws*, an effect achieved by way of the Athenian's concessions to the laughable. By allowing the laughable to inhabit a more playful space, the Athenian depicts τὸ γελοῖον as a potentially good-natured experience—an expression of positive emotion. The meanings of ὁ γελώς, τὸ γελοῖον, and κωμῳδεῖν all remain distinct, but the laughable and "comedy" are portrayed in the *Laws* as having more in common with each other and even with laughter than they do elsewhere. The semantic rift between laughter and the laughable is not repaired, but it is in some sense bridged.

It would be foolhardy, if not futile, to attempt to articulate a unified Platonic theory of laughter from the three texts in which Plato offers considerations of laughter and the laughable. Not one of these dialogues contains a conclusive treatment of laughter, and even if a section of a dialogue seems to offer such a treatment (e.g., the investigation of the laughable in the *Philebus*), the specific discussion is eventually subordinated to a larger argument, and laughter remains something of a loose end.

Any positive representation of laughter in the discussions of the *Republic*, the *Philebus*, and the *Laws* appears as a concession, which is to say that the *status quo* for laughter and the laughable within Plato's philosophic discourse is predominately negative. Yet this conclusion does not do justice to an ongoing tension in Plato's texts, namely that between the arguments expressed *within* a dialogue and those built into the frame of the dialogue itself. There are numerous occasions of laughter in the Platonic corpus which are elicited in the course of friendly conversation and playful banter, and it is difficult to reconcile these seemingly-positive

depictions with the critical theories of laughter which they frame. One might be able to distill a theory from these "literary" depictions of laughter, but I will not attempt to do this with Plato; my intention in exploring Plato has been to identify ancient theories of laughter—not to determine his own perspective on laughter, if such a determination is even possible. It is through my examinations of the poetry of Vergil, Horace, and Ovid that I intend to elucidate a "theory" of representations of literary laughter.

In examining Plato's comments on laughter, I have repeatedly highlighted the difference between Plato's representations of laughter (γελᾶν) and the laughable (τὸ γελοῖον), and I have urged that despite their etymological ties, Plato uses the verbal/nominal and adjectival forms to convey different semantic concepts rather than syntactical ones. I devote this attention to the semantic deviation of τὸ γελοῖον and γελᾶν because the predominately negative significance of τὸ γελοῖον contributes to the widespread interpretation of Plato as the first Western philosopher to offer a version of one of the primary explanations of laughter: the superiority theory.[46]

According to the superiority theory as it is broadly conceived (namely, through the lens of later theories of laughter), people laugh at what is bad or what is "below them," and in so laughing, they assert their superiority, be it intellectual, moral, physiological, or otherwise. I believe that the theory has its most precise Platonic formulation in the passage from Book 5 of the *Republic* discussed above (452d3-e2). There, the man who considers something other than "the bad" to be laughable is labeled a fool, as is the man who attempts to rouse laughter at the expense of something other than what is foolish or bad. With the two words Socrates uses to gloss τὸ γελοῖον in this passage, τὸ κακόν and τὸ ἄφρον, a spectrum of Greek inferiority is conveyed, from the physical or moral failings expressed in τὸ κακόν to the intellectual

46 The superiority theory receives its most precise formulation in Hobbes' reference to "sudden glory" and his mention of superiority and inferiority (treated in the following pages).

shortcomings of τὸ ἄφρον. Another instantiation of the superiority theory of laughter is evident in the passage from Book 3 that precedes Socrates' argument against excessive laughter; Socrates suggests that the guardians should "laugh-down" (καταγελῶεν in 388d3) immoderate lamentation. The superiority of the "laugher" over the laughable is never expressly articulated by Socrates, but the repeated invocation of the moral and intellectual shortcomings of τὸ γελοῖον invite such a conclusion.

Similarly in the *Philebus*, the seed of the superiority theory is apparent in Socrates' treatment and definition of τὸ γελοῖον, which he construes as a product of (self-)ignorance (*Phlb*. 48c8-d3 and *Phlb*. 49a5-6). In Book 7 of the *Laws*, laughable behavior is initially treated as irreconcilable with a virtuous life (*Leg*. 816e2-5), and in Book 11, the laughable must be softened and groomed for limited-inclusion in the εὔνομος πόλις. Τὸ γελοῖον remains a mark of inferiority.

The distinction that Plato maintains between laughter and the laughable complicates this otherwise simple picture. Laughter (ὁ γέλως) can arise independently from the laughable (τὸ γελοῖον), and vice versa. In episodes from the *Republic* and the *Philebus* discussed previously, it is apparent that laughter is a *fitting* response to something designated laughable—not a *necessary* one.

Because a designation of someone or something as "laughable" is not a necessary and sufficient condition for laughter, the presence of laughter is not a necessary or sufficient reason for labeling something bad, even if the designation of something as laughable is sufficient reason. Plato himself has Socrates hypothesize an occasion of ("wrong") laughter in response to the nude exercising of the female guardians; he argues that this proposed training regimen is neither laughable nor bad (*Resp.* 452a7-457b5). As for the scornful laughter of the guardians in

Book 3 of the *Republic* (καταγελῷεν in 388d3), the use of the prefixed form of the verb γελᾶν invites the reader to consider that the unprefixed form is semantically distinct and may express something softer than scorn or superiority. This depiction of laughter as something other than an expression of exultant scorn holds true in numerous other passages already discussed, such as when laughter is treated as a clear manifestation of pleasure (*Phlb*. 50a7-10) or a potential expression of joy (*Leg*. 732c1-4), not to mention the frequent occasions of friendly laughter exchanged in the narrative portions of Plato's dialogues.[47]

I make the preceding argument to advance a more cautious approach to Platonic laughter rather than a drastically different one. In truth, the objections I have enumerated can easily be addressed by regarding the superiority theory in Plato as a "theory of the laughable" instead of "a theory of laughter," a somewhat unstartling modification in light of the extent to which Plato treats τὸ γελοῖον. Yet the superiority theory is not widely understood as a theory of the laughable. The theory receives its most famous explanation in a passage from Thomas Hobbes' *Human Nature*: "[T]he passion of laughter is nothing else but *sudden glory* arising from some sudden *conception* of some *eminency* in ourselves, by *comparison* with the *infirmity* of others, or with our own formerly."[48] In the *Leviathan*, Hobbes repackages the point: "*Sudden glory* is the passion which maketh those *grimaces* called LAUGHTER; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them, or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves."[49] In reading the two quotations against one another, one can see that Hobbes treats "sudden glory" as the emotional, psychological, or intellectual impetus of the physical behavior known as laughter. Though it has been suggested

47 The interpretation of laughter as a "pleasure" or a "joy" and the interpretation of laughter as a display of superiority are not mutually exclusive. The presence of "congenial" laughter in the dialogues still remains the best argument against a blanket application of the superiority theory to Plato.

48 Hobbes (1840) 46. *Human Nature*, Ch. 9, para. 13. Textual emphases are his.

49 Hobbes (1839) 46. *Leviathan*, Pt. 1, Ch. 6, para. 42. Textual emphases are his.

that Hobbes "was clearly not silly enough to regard nervous giggles or polite laughter . . . as fitting what he says," Hobbes remains consistent in his depiction of laughter—and *not* the laughable—as an expression of self-congratulatory superiority.[50]

In addition to the superiority theory, elements of the relief theory of laughter are evident in Plato's discussions about laughter and the laughable. The relief theory treats laughter as a release from tension—emotional, psychological, intellectual, physical, or combinations thereof. Plato presents laughter not so much as a relief from a named tension but as a balance to more serious pursuits. In Book 7 of the *Laws*, the Athenian declares the interdependence of τὰ γελοῖα and τὰ σπουδαῖα: "For without laughable matters, it is impossible to understand serious ones—and likewise for all opposites—if one wants to be wise" (816d9-e2). The Athenian's emphasis here is on knowledge of the laughable rather than a practical application of it, though he ultimately makes space for certain laughable productions in the well-governed city. A similar conception of laughter as a counterbalance to seriousness is attributed by Aristotle to Gorgias in a passage discussed in the following section. It is sufficient to note here that neither Plato's Athenian nor Aristotle's Gorgias asserts that laughter offers a "relief" from seriousness, but both texts suggest that laughter and the laughable lend perspective to seriousness.

Some assumptions are required to observe a more conventional relief theory in the Platonic corpus, and so I offer the following argument with all due caution. Insofar as ἡ παιδιά may be thought to share "semantic space" with τὸ γελοῖον (as the verb παίζειν does in *Leg.* 935d6-7, discussed above),[51] Socrates presents a version of the relief theory at *Phlb*. 30e6-7: "For, Protarchus, play sometimes offers relief from seriousness." The term ἀνάπαυλα explicitly conveys the sense of relief, although ἡ παιδιά ("play") rather than τὸ γελοῖον is offered as a

50 Ewin (2001) 29. Ewin concludes, quite persuasively, that "It is not the laughter that is of concern to Hobbes, but the passion that the laughter expresses" (40).

51 Another lexical possibility for παιδιά is "wit, jesting." LSJ s.v. παιδιά.

balance to seriousness (ἡ σπουδή). The connection, however, remains unsatisfactory. Even if παιδιά is tied to the laughable, the relief theory is a theory about laughter, not the laughable. We must wait for Aristotle to draw a direct connection between laughter, play, and relaxation. Components of the relief theory are nevertheless hinted at in Plato's dialogues, even if an explicit version of the relief theory is not articulated.

In the course of drawing out the differences between laughter and the laughable as they are presented in the *Republic*, the *Philebus*, and the *Laws*, I emphasize that these interpretations should not necessarily be interpreted as Plato's own outlook on laughter but only as a possible outlook at the time that Plato was composing and living. Moreover, even though some of the Platonic perspectives on laughter can be made to fit into considerably later explanations such as the superiority and relief theories, Plato does not present theories with these names, nor does he offer a unified theory of laughter and the laughable. The less dialogic and, arguably, less enigmatic approach that Aristotle offers in his philosophical works functions as a fitting counterpoint to Plato as ancient theories of laughter were further posited and further articulated.

3.2 Aristotle's Superiority Relieved

Aristotle's theoretical pronouncements on laughter and the laughable are scattered throughout his corpus and, much like Plato's reflections in the passing on laughter in the *Republic*, the *Philebus*, and the *Laws*, are embedded in examinations of other topics. The ostensible reason for Aristotle's lacunose treatment of laughter in his extant works is that he examined laughter and comedy at length in a now-lost second book of the *Poetics*.[52] Impressive

52 Aristotle himself suggests as much in, e.g., *Rhet.*1371b33: διώρισται δὲ περὶ γελοίων χωρὶς ἐν τοῖς περὶ ποιητικῆς. McMahon (1917) 2 notes, as evidence of a plurality of books on the *Poetics*, that "the definite article is used in the plural."

attempts have been made to reconstruct the lost work based upon the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, but any consensus as to whether the *Tractatus* is an accurate reflection of Aristotle's own work has yet to be reached.[53] Consequently, for an understanding of Aristotle's position on laughter, it seems most prudent to examine his comments on laughter and the laughable in his undisputed corpus. Thorough examinations of the laughable (as a concept more expansive than τὸ γελοῖον) and of "comic theory" have been offered by Grant (1924) and Parker (1986). My focus will continue to fall on explicit references to laughter and the laughable.[54]

I begin by noting that Aristotle's comments on laughter and the laughable are sometimes cited as evidence for his espousal of a superiority theory of laughter.[55] In the following pages, I advance an interpretation of τὸ γελοῖον and ὁ γέλως in Aristotle that is less monolithic and emphasizes his "*less* superior" treatments of these concepts. While laughter and the laughable are repeatedly portrayed in Aristotle's reflections as potentially painful, destructive, and/or ugly, and while the laughable, at least within the bounds of comedy, is described as having a share in the shameful, Aristotle resists any identification of laughter and the laughable as "bad" in themselves. On the contrary, his willingness to align laughter with notions of play, relaxation, and pleasure coordinates with aspects of the relief theory of laughter.

Among Aristotle's lengthiest treatments of laughter and the laughable is Chapter 8 in Book 4 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1127b33-1128b4). This passage examines a particular

53 Grant (1924) 32 states that the *Tractatus* "follows the Aristotelian tradition at least, if it does not directly represent it." Janko (1984) and most recently Watson (2012) base reconstructions of a second book of the *Poetics* on the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, which Watson regards as the "epitome" (p. 9) of the Aristotelian text. Halliwell (2008) 392, by contrast, does not consider the *Tractatus* to be a "reliable guide to the lost second book of Aristotle's *Poetics*." In a broader survey of all theories of laughter with which the Augustan poets might have had contact—setting aside the authenticity of the text as a representative reflection of Aristotle's position on laughter or comedy—the *Tractatus* would certainly feature. I have excluded it from the present survey because little of relevance to the current discussion of the three canonical theories distinguishes it from positions articulated in Platonic, Aristotelian, and Ciceronian texts.

54 For fuller treatments of Aristotelian "comic" theory with attention to its impact on Latin literature, see Grant (1924) and Parker (1986).

55 E.g., Morreall (1983) 5 and Plaza (2006) 7. Plaza also asserts that "all humour theories which have come down to us from antiquity belong to the Superiority category" (7).

virtuous “example of the mean” of harmonious social interaction, “there being relaxation in life and, in this, a passing of time with play” (οὔσης δὲ καὶ ἀναπαύσεως ἐν τῷ βίῳ, καὶ ἐν ταύτῃ διαγωγῆς μετὰ παιδιᾶς, 1127b33-34). Those embodying the mean are regarded as the “adept” or “witty” (εὐτράπελοι), those “going to excess in the laughable” are identified as the “buffoonish” (βωμολόχοι), and those being deficient in laughing matters as the “boorish” (ἄγροικοι). Aristotle notes that people have trouble keeping distinct the characters of the εὐτράπελος and the βωμολόχος, “because the laughable is prevalent and most people are pleased more than necessary by play and jesting” (ἐπιπολάζοντος δὲ τοῦ γελοίου, καὶ τῶν πλείστων χαιρόντων τῇ παιδιᾷ καὶ τῷ σκώπτειν μᾶλλον ἢ δεῖ). In other words, people's enjoyment of laughter clouds their judgment of its propriety. He even goes so far as to speculate that proper jesting may be undefinable (ἀόριστον), “because different things are hateful and pleasant (μισητόν τε καὶ ἡδύ) to different people.”

The passage offers a short meditation on the polyvalence of laughter and the laughable. Laughter is characterized as a slippery behavior that, as Aristotle notes, can mean significantly different things to different people. The appropriate cultivation and deployment of laughter is never explicitly asserted to be a distinguishing characteristic of “adept” individuals (εὐτράπελοι). Instead, Aristotle states that these people play “harmoniously” (ἐμμελῶς παίζοντες) and demonstrate tact (ἐπιδεξιότης) and propriety (τινα πρέποντα) in speaking and jesting. Those who deviate from the mean of εὐτραπελία in either direction, however, do so with respect to their use of laughter. Aristotle notes that overindulgence in the laughable and a singleminded focus on raising laughter mark a deviation toward excess (1128a5-7 and 1128a33-b1), and an inability to say anything laughable or to endure the saying of such a thing by others (1128a8-10) involves a deviation toward deficiency. Thus Aristotle implies that an apt use of

laughter and proper treatment of the laughable befits the liberal (ἐλευθέριος) individual.[56] Moreover, the figure embodying adeptness (εὐτραπελία) offers the most appropriate social contributions in times of relaxation and play. And, as Aristotle states in his conclusion of the passage at 1128b3-4, "it seems that relaxation and play in life are necessary."

One can immediately see how Aristotle's situating of laughter and the laughable (via εὐτραπελία) in the context of relaxation (ἡ ἀνάπαυσις) bears a resemblance to the relief theory of laughter. One of the most concise versions of the relief theory is articulated in Sigmund Freud's *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*: "We would say that laughter arises when the sum total of psychic energy, formerly used for the occupation of certain psychic channels, has become unutilizable so that it can experience absolute discharge."[57] Freud goes on to explain, using an anecdote from Mark Twain, that laughter can discharge energy that has been reserved for another emotion (for example, pity), the expression of which emotion has, for whatever reason, become superfluous.[58] Although many of the earliest versions of the relief theory rely upon an outdated conception of human biology, the basic principle hinges on an acknowledgment, still prevalent today, that tension can be released or relieved through laughter.

Near the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle makes a case for the importance of play and rest, but he maintains that they are both inferior to the pursuit of happiness, which is a serious matter and an end in itself:

> ἀναπαύσει γὰρ ἔοικεν ἡ παιδιά, ἀδυνατοῦντες δὲ συνεχῶς πονεῖν ἀναπαύσεως δέονται. Οὐ δὴ τέλος ἡ ἀνάπαυσις: γίνεται γὰρ ἕνεκα τῆς ἐνεργείας. Δοκεῖ δ᾽ ὁ εὐδαίμων βίος κατ᾽ ἀρετὴν εἶναι: οὗτος δὲ μετὰ σπουδῆς, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἐν παιδιᾷ. βελτίω τε λέγομεν τὰ σπουδαῖα τῶν γελοίων καὶ μετὰ παιδιᾶς[. . .]. (1176b35-1177a4)

56 Grant (1924) 27 regards the passage "as one of the most important in the development of the theory of the laughable. In it the ill-natured and good-natured jests are clearly distinguished and called by the names which pass over into Latin, the illiberal and liberal jest, that which harmonizes with the character of the free man and that which does not." She tracks these ideas through Cicero's *De oratore*, *Orator*, and *De officiis* in the second chapter of her work.

57 Freud and Brill (1916) 226.

58 Freud and Brill (1916) 374-376.

> For play is like to relaxation, and people, because they are unable to work continuously, need relaxation. But relaxation is not an end in itself: for it occurs on account of activity. But the happy life seems to be lived according to virtue: and this is a life with a share in seriousness and not in play. We say that serious matters are better than laughable ones and ones with a share in play [. . .].

With his categorical statements about the superiority of serious matters at the end of the passage, Aristotle seems to leave little room for play and laughter in his worldview, yet he argues not for the elimination of these behaviors but for their subordination.[59] Laughter and play and relaxation, while not proper ends in themselves, are necessary means to Aristotle's pursuit of the highest good of happiness (ἡ εὐδαιμονία) and a life lived according to virtue (κατ᾽ ἀρετὴν). As an occasional relaxation—or relief—from such a serious pursuit, which Aristotle acknowledges cannot possibly continue unabated, people might reasonably play and, yes, even laugh, so long as these things are done moderately. In this way, the argument aligns well with the differences between "adeptness" and "buffoonery" explicated in Book 4 of the *Ethics* (1127b33-1128b4).

Halliwell (2008) draws upon the passage in Book 4 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* at length in a section of *Greek Laughter* entitled, "How Aristotle makes a virtue of laughter," supplementing his examination with a sentence from the *Rhetoric* in which "adeptness" among young men is defined as "educated hubris" (ἡ γὰρ εὐτραπελία πεπαιδευμένη ὕβρις ἐστίν, *Rhet*. 1389b11-12). He concludes that the Aristotelian approach to laughter has a dynamic range:

> All this reveals that Aristotle sees the 'spirit' of laughter as extending along a spectrum which his model of deficiency/virtue/excess reduces to ethical order: at one end of the spectrum, the hubristic, shaming underside of laughter runs riot, while in the virtuous middle range the impression of offensiveness (*hubris*) is 'educated' and moulded, through shared codes of play, into a medium of reciprocated friendship. Where genuine *eutrapelia* is achieved, the appearance of *hubris* will be nothing more than playful pretence. It will replace the risk of pain with the reality of pleasure [. . .].[60]

59 Grant (1924) 25 speculates that, "From this idea perhaps arose the theory of the genres [. . .] according to which the different types of poetry such as lyric, epic, tragedy, and comedy, were ranked highly or not in proportion to their seriousness."

60 Halliwell (2008) 324.

Halliwell's comments about "reciprocated friendship," "playful pretence," and "the reality of pleasure" identify a positive aspect in Aristotle's portrayal of laughter when modeled appropriately by the "adept" individual. Perhaps this is less surprising in light of the fact that the Greek term εὐτραπελία contains a prefix εὐ- that, at least on first-reading, grants the concept a positive cast.[61] Additionally, despite the fact that laughter's (and jesting's) destructive potential is implicit in descriptions of decorous laughter as "not giving pain" (μὴ λυπεῖν in 1128a7 and 1128a26), the references to play (ἡ παιδιά), relaxation (ἡ ἀνάπαυσις), delight (τέρπειν), and the pleasant (ἡδύ) reinforce the possibility of virtuous laughter through the passage.

Halliwell also takes pains to diminish the role of hubris in the "adept" individual's use of laughter and the laughable. As I note in my previous remarks on Plato's *Philebus*, the collocation of pleasure with laughter does not by necessity preclude feelings of superiority, but the idea of "educated hubris" in Aristotle emphasizes the possibility of scaling back or molding any superiority that hubris may entail. What remains at the end of this passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* and at the end of the *Ethics* as a whole is an ideal of laughter for Aristotle that is grounded not in assertions of superiority or critiques of badness but in friendly social intercourse, play, and pleasant relaxation that aids in the serious pursuit of happiness. In this sense, his treatment of "flawed" laughter has more in common with a superiority theory, but his treatment of "ideal" laughter more closely resembles a relief theory.

Similar references to "ideal" laughter appear in other passages from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. While discussing pleasure (ἡ ἡδονή) in Chapter 11 of Book 1, Aristotle takes for granted that laughter is pleasant in the course of pursuing a logical proof about laughable things:

> ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπεὶ ἡ παιδιὰ τῶν ἡδέων καὶ πᾶσα ἄνεσις, καὶ ὁ γέλως τῶν ἡδέων, ἀνάγκη καὶ τὰ γελοῖα ἡδέα εἶναι, καὶ ἀνθρώπους καὶ λόγους καὶ ἔργα [. . .]. περὶ μὲν οὖν ἡδέων εἰρήσθω ταῦτα, τὰ δὲ λυπηρὰ ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων τούτοις φανερά.

61 The adjective form is, according to LSJ, used "in a bad sense" in authors like Isocrates and Plutarch.

(*Rhet.* 1371b35-1372a1)

> Likewise, since play and all relaxing and laughter are pleasant, it is necessary also that laughable things—men, words, and deeds—are pleasant [. . .]. Concerning, then, the pleasant, let these things be said: the painful things are apparent from the opposite of these things.

Plato's semantic rift between laughter and the laughable seems to have disappeared as the laughable acquires a significantly more positive coloring. That Aristotle is referring to laughter and the laughable when they are properly used—i.e., in their ideal forms—is confirmed by the universally "pleasant" description he grants them. Moreover, laughter's potential to cause pain is expressly denied, because pleasant things (to which class laughter and the laughable emphatically belong) are the opposite of painful things (τὰ λυπηρά).

In a description of the characteristics of mild men (οἱ πρᾶοι) in Chapter 3 of Book 2 of the *Rhetoric* (1380b2-5), Aristotle compares these men to the angry men he has treated in the previous chapter:

> καὶ ἔχοντες δὲ ἐναντίως τῷ ὀργίζεσθαι δῆλον ὅτι πρᾶοί εἰσιν, οἷον ἐν παιδιᾷ, ἐν γέλωτι, ἐν ἑορτῇ, ἐν εὐημερίᾳ, ἐν κατορθώσει, ἐν πληρώσει, ὅλως ἐν ἀλυπίᾳ καὶ ἡδονῇ μὴ ὑβριστικῇ καὶ ἐν ἐλπίδι ἐπιεικεῖ. (*Rhet.* 1380b2-5)
>
> And those who feel the opposite of being angry, it is clear that they are mild, as when at play, during laughter, at a feast, in good times, in success, amidst fulfillment, and when wholly in painlessness and pleasure *sans* offense and in fitting hope.

The accompaniments of laughter are all emphatically pleasant, and negative concepts of pain and offensiveness are only mentioned for their absence: ἀλυπίᾳ καὶ ἡδονῇ μὴ ὑβριστικῇ.

A term shared between these passages from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, besides laughter (ὁ γέλως) itself, is play—ἡ παιδιά.[62] Variations on relaxation and pleasure also appear in each passage. In the selection from Book 1 of the *Rhetoric*, ἄνεσις, a synonym for ἀνάπαυσις, is placed between play and laughter; and pleasure (ἡδονή), a word cognate in the Greek with

62 This is accompanied by related vocabulary for pleasure and the pleasant: ἡδέα and ἡδονή.

pleasant things (ἡδέα),[63] is listed in the passage from Book 2 alongside laughter and play. The confluence of laughter, pleasure, relaxation, and play in the *Rhetoric* and the positive depiction that these concepts are given makes particular sense in a rhetorical treatise. The power of laughter in oratory was certainly not unknown to Aristotle. He credits the sophist Gorgias with a noteworthy bit of advice on the role of laughter in agonistic rhetorical exchanges: "And Gorgias said that it is necessary to destroy the seriousness of opponents with laughter, and laughter with seriousness, and he was right" (καὶ δεῖν ἔφη Γοργίας τὴν μὲν σπουδὴν διαφθείρειν τῶν ἐναντίων γέλωτι τὸν δὲ γέλωτα σπουδῇ, ὀρθῶς λέγων [. . .]).[64] Gorgias' juxtaposition of seriousness against laughter bears a striking similarity to Aristotle's own juxtaposition in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177a3-4 of "serious matters" against laughable ones and play (βελτίω τε λέγομεν τὰ σπουδαῖα τῶν γελοίων καὶ μετὰ παιδιᾶς). Yet Gorgias' rhetorical sentiment does not entail the same subordination of the laughable to the serious that Aristotle's ethical statement demands. For Gorgias, seriousness and laughter are equally necessary in rhetorical exchanges. Remarkably, Aristotle voices his agreement.

The *Poetics* offers one of Aristotle's most direct approaches to the laughable and a simple reminder that some degree of superiority remains associated with his depiction of the laughable:

> Ἡ δὲ κωμῳδία ἐστὶν ὥσπερ εἴπομεν μίμησις φαυλοτέρων μέν, οὐ μέντοι κατὰ πᾶσαν κακίαν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ ἐστι τὸ γελοῖον μόριον. τὸ γὰρ γελοῖόν ἐστιν ἁμάρτημά τι καὶ αἶσχος ἀνώδυνον καὶ οὐ φθαρτικόν, οἷον εὐθὺς τὸ γελοῖον πρόσωπον αἰσχρόν τι καὶ διεστραμμένον ἄνευ ὀδύνης. (1449a32-37)
>
> Comedy is (just as we have said) mimesis of meaner things, not, however, corresponding with badness altogether; rather, the laughable is part of the shameful. For the laughable is a certain defect and deformity that is harmless and not destructive, as, for example, the laughable mask is something shameful and distorted but not painful.

This definition of τὸ γελοῖον is noteworthy for the implicit distinction it draws between

63 Chantraine (1980) s.v. ἥδομαι.
64 *Rhet*. 1419b4-6.

"comedy" and the "laughable." The terms share semantic space in that τὸ γελοῖον is instrumental to the defining of comedy as well as to the embedded description of the comic mask, but they differ in that the laughable is not a type of mimesis.

One can immediately understand how subsequent laughter theorists might draw upon this passage as evidence of Aristotle's belief that laughter indicates superiority.[65] Aristotle's definitions of comedy and the laughable are burdened with terminology implying inferiority. When the laughable is defined as "part of the shameful" and "a certain defect and deformity," the implication is that people see such defects and deformities as beneath them, and laughter communicates their superiority. But a brief consideration of the rhetorical progression of the passage allows for a softer reading of τὸ γελοῖον.

There is no softening the fact that the domain of comedy is comparatively mean when set against that of tragedy, but as soon as Aristotle declares in *Poetics* 1449a32-33 that comedy is "mimesis of lower things," he proceeds as if endeavoring to blunt the force of this assertion. He first notes that comedy does not take as its subject badness *per se* (οὐ μέντοι κατὰ πᾶσαν κακίαν), and he then acknowledges that the laughable is a component of the shameful. Importantly, Aristotle does not assert that the laughable *is* shameful, rather, he saves his ontological statements for the following sentence wherein he declares that the laughable is a defect and a deformity. Yet even these assertions are softened as he emphasizes that the laughable is *not* harmful, *not* destructive, and *not* painful. The reader may very well be wondering what the laughable really is. Absent from Aristotle's definition are any positive elements of τὸ γελοῖον. Where are play, pleasure, and relaxation? Perhaps Aristotle subtly introduces these and other associations of the laughable with his mention of the "laughable

65 Plaza (2006) 7 offers no further explanation than the following sentence: "The next version of the Superiority theory is sketched by Aristotle in his *Poetics* 5.1449a, where he defines the laughable as that which is ugly without being painful."

mask." In calling to the reader's mind the visual trappings of comedy with his mention of the comic mask, Aristotle concretizes the theoretical discussion of comedy in an instant, constructs a performance venue with masked actors on stage, and places the reader of the *Poetics* as spectator in it. As the reader imagines himself contemplating the effect of the comic mask in this festive theatrical atmosphere, notions of play, pleasure, and relaxation may effortlessly follow.

Whatever the merits of this last suggestion, Aristotle's explicit references to laughter and the laughable in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Rhetoric*, and the *Poetics* are certainly not in line with a uniform superiority theory of laughter. Halliwell (2008) observes that, "Concern with the nature and boundaries of appropriate laughter enters the *Ethics* [. . .] not as a free-standing or abstract theme for moral reflection but as a dimension of real social interaction."[66] The point is all the more applicable to Aristotle's practically-leaning works on rhetoric and literary theory as he remains perpetually aware of laughter's function in "the real world." Aristotle demonstrates an additional awareness that laughter in the real world can have vastly different motivations and effects. For example, a disconnect exists in the *Ethics* (1127b33-1128b4) between the laughter of the buffoon, the laughlessness of the boor (both of which would fall under my designation above of "flawed" laughter), and the "ideal" laughter of the "adept" individual. But even "flawed" laughter—part of the shameful though it may be—stops short of sharing in what is truly "bad," and the laughter that Aristotle suggests is objectionable, such as that of the buffoon or the boor, is bad not in essence but in application. Otherwise the virtuous mean would not accommodate laughter at all.

Laughter's essence, to judge from its many pleasant accompaniments as listed in *Rhetoric* 1371b35-1372a1 and *Rhetoric* 1380b2-5, shares conceptual ground not only with laughable things (which is itself a signficant departure from the predominantly negative Platonic depiction

66 Halliwell (2008) 308.

of τὸ γελοῖον) but also with pleasure, relaxation, and play, all of which concepts are set against seriousness in Aristotle's works. Ultimately, the "ideal" laughter that Aristotle depicts in his works has much in common with a relief theory of laughter that emphasizes laughter's potential to contribute positively to a happy life and to aid in periods of relaxation and—a concept to which I return in Chapters 4, 5, and 6—play. These and additional aspects of laughter and the laughable are revisited in greater detail in works by Cicero, and it is to these that I now turn.

3.3 Cicero's Proliferation of Theories

Marcus Tullius Cicero offers his first and fullest treatment of laughter and the laughable in Book 2 of *De oratore*, a work that openly acknowledges debts to Plato and Aristotle in form and content.[67] The dialogic structure that the work adopts, including setting and components of the narrative, is self-consciously lifted from Plato's dialogues,[68] while Aristotle's service as a model is even more explicitly confessed: "Therefore I have written, in the Aristotelian custom (*Aristotelio more*), insofar as I wished, three books in argument and dialogue on the orator (*de oratore*)"[69] Cicero's indebtedness to Plato and Aristotle is particularly apparent in that portion of

67 Leeman, Pinkster, and Rabbie (1989) offer a thorough treatment and commentary on this section of *De oratore* in "Inventio G: Witz und Humor (2,216b-290)" (172-333), including diagrams of the divisions and distinctions in vocabulary adopted by the various speakers (178-80) and a discussion of "Die Terminologie des Lächerlichen bei Cicero, besonders in De or." (183-8).

68 *De or.* 1.28: *postero autem die, cum illi maiores natu satis quiessent et in ambulationem ventum esset, [dicebat] tum Scaevolam duobus spatiis tribusve factis dixisse "cur non imitamur, Crasse, Socratem illum, qui est in Phaedro Platonis? nam me haec tua platanus admonuit, quae non minus ad opacandum hunc locum patulis est diffusa ramis, quam illa, cuius umbram secutus est Socrates, quae mihi videtur non tam ipsa acula, quae describitur, quam Platonis oratione crevisse, et quod ille durissimis pedibus fecit, ut se abiceret in herba atque ita [illa], quae philosophi divinitus ferunt esse dicta, loqueretur, id meis pedibus certe concedi est aequius.* Cf. Att. 4.16.3. Fantham (2004) argues persuasively in her chapter on the structure of *De oratore* ("Constructing the Dialogue," pp. 49-77) that "Cicero set out in this, his first dialogue, to emulate the form and manner of Plato's early and middle dialogues" (50), though she also indicates the unsuitability of Socratic elenchos as an end-goal for Cicero's work (53-4).

69 *Fam.* 1.9: *scripsi igitur, Aristotelio more, quem ad modum quidem volui, tris libros in disputatione et dialogo 'de oratore' [. . .]*. Fantham (2004) concisely indicates how Cicero's emulation of Aristotle is evident not only in his choice of content but also his departure from the Platonic tendency to construct a straw man (17-8), and she explores Cicero's debts to Aristotle at greater length in the chapter "Rediscovering Aristotelian Invention" (161-85).

the work which examines the role of laughter and humor in oratory, the *excursus de ridiculis* from 2.216 to 290, wherein Cicero dramatizes a conversation between distinguished Roman orators about laughter and jokes. Many of Plato's and Aristotle's observations on laughter are revisited, explicated, and pushed in new directions. Mary Grant dedicates the second chapter of *Ancient Rhetorical Theories of the Laughable* (1924) to "The Laughable in Cicero," and her detailed and readable study of the *excursus* along with that of Leeman-Pinskter-Rabbie (1989) frees me to be selective in my treatment of Cicero's original contributions to ancient theories of laughter. I focus in particular and at greater length on parallels to and deviations from the Platonic and Aristotelian passages I have examined in the preceding pages. In the process, I also begin to acquaint readers with the Latin vocabulary of laughter and the risible "in action."

The structure of the inset conversation about laughter, wit, and humor is summarized at *De oratore* 2.235 when Julius Caesar Strabo (henceforth "Caesar") outlines the five questions with which I open this introductory chapter. After posing these questions, Caesar spends the remainder of the discussion answering them in varying degrees of detail, devoting, for example, little time to explaining the nature of laughter while paying significant attention to laughter's proper use and cultivation by an orator.

Curiously, laughter has been the focus of the conversation for nearly twenty chapters by the time Caesar poses his questions in 2.235, and even though the material most pertinent to our own inquiry appears in response to these questions, the chapters that transition to this inset conversation (216-234) offer an introductory portrait of laughter more generally. The discussion of laughter and wit proceeds from a broader consideration, led by Antonius, of the proper use of emotion in oratory (185-216). As he concludes his remarks on emotion, Antonius argues, in a passage reminiscent of Gorgias' pronouncement (as reported by Aristotle) on the use of laughter and seriousness as counterbalances to one another, that an audience's emotional responses, when

undesired by the speaker, should be combated "by opposite emotions (*contrariis commotionibus*) so that benevolence may be lifted away by hatred, envy by pity."[70] He states that a joke or a witticism is pleasant and useful in this regard, and, after quickly asserting that wit is not a teachable skill, Antonius hands the topic off to Caesar.[71]

Caesar agrees: *Quare mihi quidem nullo modo videtur doctrina ista res posse tradi*—"For which reason this matter certainly seems to me in no way able to be imparted by instruction".[72] Such a disclaimer does not mean that the inquiry is over, despite the fact that Caesar has also just disparaged previous attempts to establish a theory *de ridiculis* (217). Caesar proceeds to identify two types of wit, *cavillatio* and *dicacitas,* and acknowledges that each has a trivial name: "But really this entire idea of provoking laughter is trivial."[73] With Caesar's rapid shift from terms for the laughable (*ridiculis* and *ridicula* in 217) to terms for laughter (*ridere* in 217 and *risus* in 218), distinctions between the meanings of these words become hazy. As Caesar presents the matter, what is *ridiculum* elicits laughter, and to laugh at something is to acknowledge it as laughable.

The fluid merging in Caesar's terminology for laughter and the laughable reveals an approach in Cicero that is distinct in some ways from his Greek predecessors—terminological divergences that will be examined as the vocabulary of laughter and the risible comes into sharper focus. Suffice it to say that in the current discussion of Cicero, the caution I exercised in separating laughter and the laughable in Plato will, by and large, be abandoned, a move that is perhaps less surprising in light of the shift toward a reconciliation of the concepts already apparent in the works of Aristotle. Differences of vocabulary and language aside, the argument

70 *De or.* 2.216: *illa autem, quae aut conciliationis causa leniter, aut permotionis vehementer aguntur, contrariis commotionibus auferenda sunt, ut odio benevolentia, misericordia invidia tollatur.*

71 An explicit term for laughter or the laughable is absent from Antonius' set-up, although three such words occur in chapter 217 when Caesar takes over (*ridiculis*, *ridicula*, and *rideatur*). Grant (1924) 100-131 presents a detailed "Analysis of Terminology" for terms used by Cicero in this passage of *De oratore*, with her stated goal being to "gain more precise information on his theory of the laughable" (100).

72 *De or.* 218.

73 *De or.* 219: *quippe leve enim est totum hoc risum movere*.

that Caesar espouses in his introduction "that witticisms are greatly and frequently beneficial in speaking" does not appear at all in Plato's discussions of laughter.[74] Plato, at his most accommodating to laughter and the laughable, has the Athenian of the *Laws* advocate only a theoretical—not practical—knowledge of the laughable.[75] As for Aristotle, his brief remarks at *Rhetoric* 1419b3-9 regarding the value of the laughable in oratory hint at Cicero's argument, but Aristotle cautiously attributes the concept to Gorgias and devotes to it only six lines rather than seventy chapters. Whether because of changes in the landscapes of oratory and philosophy or because of changes in the times and places for which Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero were writing, the Roman orator pushes his discussions of laughter and the laughable in additional and more diverse directions than either of the Greek philosophers. Yet the points of similarity between Cicero's, Aristotle's, and Plato's theoretical discussions of laughter still outnumber the differences. These similarities become apparent when Caesar explicitly describes the source of laughter and thus offers a fitting point of entry into Cicero's "theory of laughter."

Caesar, after setting the agenda for the discussion of laughter in *De oratore* 2.235, claims not to know a satisfactory answer to his first question regarding the nature of the behavior—a judicious move, considering that a satisfactory answer to this question is still wanting.[76] To his second question about the source of laughter (*unde sit* in 2.235), Caesar's response is concise and authoritative:

> *locus autem et regio quasi ridiculi – nam id proxime quaeritur – turpitudine et deformitate quadam continetur; haec enim ridentur uel sola uel maxime, quae notant et designant turpitudinem aliquam non turpiter.* (*De or.* 236)
>
> However the place and domain, so to speak, of the laughable—for it is our second question—is delimited by a certain unseemliness and ugliness; for those things (either alone or most especially) provoke laughter which mark out and designate some

74 *De or.* 227: *quare tibi, Antoni, utrumque assentior, et multum facetias in dicendo prodesse saepe . . .*

75 Cf. *Leg.* 816d9-e6, when the Athenian says it is necessary to understand (μανθάνειν) the laughable so as to avoid doing such laughable things (ὅσα γελοῖα).

76 *De or.* 235: *atque illud primum, quid sit ipse risus . . . viderit Democritus.*

unseemliness in a not unseemly manner.

Plato and Aristotle would be proud. Echoes of the Platonic interpretation of τὸ γελοῖον from *Resp.* 452d3-e2 and *Phlb.*48c8-d3 and of Aristotle's definition of comedy and the laughable from *Poetics* 1449a30 resonate throughout this Ciceronian passage. Caesar does not designate the laughable as "bad" or "evil," as Plato does, but the *locus ridiculi* is indisputably indecorous, as the repeated appearance of *turpitudo* attests. Caesar's definition almost sounds like a paraphrase of Aristotle's identification of τὸ γελοῖον in the *Poetics* as "a certain defect and deformity that is harmless and not destructive," with Caesar's *deformitas* offering a winning translation of the Greek αἶσχος. There are even several structural parallels between the sentences, including the use of two nouns in each definition (*turpitudine et deformitate* vs. ἁμάρτημα . . . καὶ αἶσχος), the placement of indefinite pronouns and adjectives (*deformitate quadam* and *turpitudinem aliquam* vs. ἁμάρτημά τι and αἰσχρόν τι), and the use of adverbial qualification at the end of each definition (*non turpiter* vs. ἄνευ ὀδύνης).

Despite these similarities in word choice and sentence structure, Cicero allows Caesar to draw an important distinction in his explanation of the source of laughter. Whereas Aristotle equates (ἐστιν) τὸ γελοῖον with "a certain defect and deformity" in *Poetics* 1449a30, Caesar does not identify the laughable itself as unseemly. His definition is cautiously mediated through the *presentation* of the laughable. This presentation of unseemly things in a markedly "*not* unseemly" fashion provokes laughter (*notant et designant . . . non turpiter*). As if already teeing up an answer to his third question ("Does it befit an orator to wish to raise a laugh?"[77]), Caesar approaches his definition of the laughable with oratory in mind. Indeed, Caesar has declared his belief in laughter's suitability to oratory just moments (i.e., chapters) earlier.[78] Caesar's attention

77 *De or.* 235: *tertium, sitne oratoris velle risum movere*.
78 *De or.* 227.

to presentation as he defines laughter and the laughable has an additional implication already alluded to above: if the *ridiculum* resides in the appropriate presentation of an unseemly thing, then the unseemly thing is not necessarily itself laughable, nor is the laughable, by definition, unseemly.

This is a remarkable philosophical leap in the treatment of laughter and the laughable in antiquity. In mediating the *ridiculum* through presentation, Caesar intimates that the laughable is a product of cognition—an intellectual construction, and not an essential nature. The recognition of the laughable and the subsequent stimulation of laughter are exercises in forms of designation, be they interpersonally linguistic or intrapersonally conceptual. Thus Caesar defines the laughable in such a way that its handling by an orator or by another cognitive agent is essential; decorous presentation of the proper material leads to laughter. Things don't provoke laughter; people provoke laughter.

But why would people, and more specifically an orator, provoke laughter? Caesar focuses on the practical psychological effects of laughter as he asserts that an orator should provoke laughter:

> It is clearly fitting for an orator to raise laughter, either because lightheartedness imparts upon the individual who excites it good will; or because we all admire sharpness, often placed in a single word, especially by a person on the defense though sometimes even by a person on the attack; or because it cracks an opponent, because it hinders, trivializes, deters, or refutes him; or because it indicates that an orator himself is a man of polish, skilled and witty, especially because he tempers and relaxes sadness and severity, and he often dissolves disagreeable matters—ones not easily diluted by argumentation—with a joke and a laugh.[79]

Though the locus of the laughable is circumscribed by unseemliness and ugliness, Caesar frees

79 *De or.* 236: *est plane oratoris mouere risum; uel quod ipsa hilaritas beneuolentiam conciliat ei, per quem excitata est; uel quod admirantur omnes acumen uno saepe in uerbo positum maxime respondentis, non numquam etiam lacessentis; uel quod frangit aduersarium, quod impedit, quod eleuat, quod deterret, quod refutat; uel quod ipsum oratorem politum esse hominem significat, quod eruditum, quod urbanum, maxime quod tristitiam ac seueritatem mitigat et relaxat odiosasque res saepe, quas argumentis dilui non facile est, ioco risuque dissoluit.*

laughter and the laughable from a simple Platonic identification with τὸ κακόν or what Aristotle calls “a certain defect and deformity.” He offers a variety of reasons for an orator to make use of laughter, the first of which, with its invocation of lightheartedness (*hilaritas*) and goodwill (*benevolentia*), is far from the underbelly of indecorousness which he says lends material to the laughable. Caesar's second reason is predominantly aesthetic in his attention to *acumen* and admiration, and even though he concedes that such sharpness may provoke appreciation when wielded by an attacker, he privileges its use by someone on the defensive. Not until his third reason does Caesar turn his attention to laughter's more combative powers, all of which are couched within the domain of rhetoric. With his final reason, Caesar returns to the domain of aesthetics as he suggests that the ability to deploy jokes and laughter puts a shiny luster of urbanity on the orator. Such an orator uses laughter to battle sadness, seriousness and, most generally, “disagreeable matters”.

After stating that the province of the laughable is contained by *turpitudo* and *deformitas*, Caesar could have explained why orators ought to utilize laughter by focusing on the proper identification of the unseemly in political, judicial, or personal affairs. Instead Caesar abandons unseemliness for the time to list instead the benefits of laughter, which he portrays as something of an orator's panacea. Caesar's drastic shift in his treatment of laughter may be unexpected, but it is not contradictory. When he defines the *locus ridiculi*, Caesar is talking about the source of laughter. When he urges laughter's use by an orator, he talks about laughter's effects. In discussing these effects, Cicero's Caesar articulates the most succinct and specific presentation of a “relief theory” of laughter to date.

As discussed in the previous summaries of Plato's and Aristotle's writings on laughter and the laughable, the relief theory treats laughter as a release from tension. Plato's Athenian in Book

7 of the *Laws*, Aristotle's Gorgias from the *Rhetoric*, and Aristotle himself in Book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the first two books of the *Rhetoric* set out precursors of this theory when they present laughter as a balance to seriousness, but both stop short of designating laughter or the laughable a form of relief *per se*. Caesar's language, however, as he lists the desirable effects of laughter's use by an orator, is attuned to the release from tension that laughter offers. The verbs *frangit*, *impedit*, *elevat*, *deterret*, and *refutat* take *adversarium* as an object, and should one dispute that such a thorough destruction of one's adversary would bring relief to a speaker, Caesar's next argument is more explicitly gauged toward relief. The skilled and witty orator uses jokes and laughter to temper and relax sadness and severity—to dissolve the disagreeable. Again, the verbs are key: *mitigat*, *relaxat*, and *dissolvit* present laughter as an oratorical massage.

The entire discussion of laughter and the laughable in *De oratore* is itself presented as a form of relief.[80] Immediately before Caesar begins his explication of laughter in earnest, Antonius says, "Indeed, I have a few things left to say, but, nevertheless, since I'm already exhausted by the labor and journey of my argument, I will take a break (*requiescam*) in Caesar's speech as if in some most-ideal lodge."[81] Caesar, when he draws his speech to a close, returns to Antonius' simile: "But now you, Antonius, who said that you would happily relax (*acquieturum*) in this lodging of my speech, just as if you were diverted into the Pomptine Marshes and not some lovely and healthful locale, I recommend that you judge yourself to have rested (*requiesse*) long enough and that you go on to finish the remaining journey."[82] Caesar's self-critique aside,

80 Fantham (2004) 186 makes the observation that "As humour brings a relief from tension in oratory, so we may expect discussion of humour to provide some relaxation of tone in the dialogue," but she stops short of tying her observation to a broader theory of laughter.

81 *De or*. 2.234: *et Antonius "perpauca quidem mihi restant," inquit "sed tamen defessus iam labore atque itinere disputationis meae requiescam in Caesaris sermone quasi in aliquo peropportuno deuersorio."*

82 *De or.* 2.290: *sed iam tu, Antoni, qui hoc deuersorio sermonis mei libenter acquieturum te esse dixisti, tamquam in Pomptinum deuerteris, neque amoenum neque salubrem locum, censeo, ut satis diu te putes requiesse et iter reliquum conficere pergas.*

the lengthy treatment of laughter's rhetorical role in Cicero's *De oratore* behaves as a metaliterary argument for the relief theory of laughter. The participants in the dialogue offer their discussion of laughter as a relief from the seriousness of oratory that comprises the rest of the work.

In *De oratore* 221, immediately after Caesar distinguishes between *cavillatio* (a prolonged use of irony throughout a speech) and *dicacitas* (a brief, typically biting use of wit), he praises Crassus for not making use of *dicacitas* in a speech on behalf of Curius. He argues that Crassus spared the dignity of an opponent and, in so doing, preserved his own.[83] Aristotle's distinction in the *Ethics* between liberal and illiberal jests is still very much alive. In fact, this distinction is articulated most clearly (and in the vocabulary that has determined our own English translations to represent it) in Cicero's later, briefer discussions of jokes, laughter, and oratory in *De officiis* and *Orator*.

In *De officiis* 1.104, Cicero draws a distinction between two types of joking:

> *duplex omnino est iocandi genus, unum inliberale, petulans, flagitiosum, obscenum, alterum elegans, urbanum, ingeniosum, facetum, quo genere non modo Plautus noster et Atticorum antiqua comoedia, sed etiam philosophorum Socraticorum libri referti sunt, multaque multorum facete dicta, ut ea, quae a sene Catone collecta sunt, quae vocantur* ἀποφθέγματα. *facilis igitur est distinctio ingenui et inliberalis ioci. alter est, si tempore fit, ut si remisso animo, <vel severissimo> homine dignus, alter ne libero quidem, si rerum turpitudo adhibetur et verborum obscenitas.*
>
> There are altogether two types of joking, one illiberal, petulant, shameful, obscene, the other elegant, cultured, clever, witty; to the latter type are related not only our Plautus and the ancient comedy of the Athenians but even the books of the Socratic philosophers, and the many cleverly said words of the multitude, such as those which have been collected by the elder Cato, which are called *apophthegms*. Consequently it is a simple distinction between the clever and the illiberal joke. One is, if used fittingly, worthy, so to speak, of a relaxed spirit or a most serious man, the other is not even worthy of a freedman if the unseemliness of topic and the obscenity of words are employed.

The man who utilizes the first type of joking, the *genus inliberale*, is reminiscent of Aristotle's

83 *De or.* 221: *parcebat enim aduersarii dignitati, in quo ipse conseruabat suam*.

βωμολόχος. He who utilizes the *elegans* and *ingeniosum* type of joking, on the other hand, bears a striking resemblance to the Aristotelian figure displaying εὐτραπελία. Cicero does not use the term *liberalis* to designate the second man, but the conclusion is definitive: there are classless jokes and classy ones, and only the latter befit individuals of Cicero's ilk. And what is laughter's role in this discussion? One might think that the guffaws that an illiberal jest elicits flag such jokes (and those who deliver them) as obscene. However, in this passage about jokes, laughter is altogether absent. Cicero uses no explicit terms for laughter, nor does he argue that one *genus iocandi* provokes more or different laughter than the other. He refers only to the manner—the spirit—in which a joke is presented. This proves to be one of Cicero's most significant contributions to "laughter theory": he often (though not always, as will be seen shortly) separates laughter, as an audible, physiological response, from who or what provokes it. After all, laughter would presumably be an acceptable response to both the illiberal and the liberal jest. Laughter, to the Roman orator, is a tremendously variegated entity, and its suitability is determined not simply by the frequency with which it is sought but by the spirit in which it is cultivated and the context in which it is elicited.

Cicero also comments briefly on laughter and the laughable in *Orator* 87-88 as he identifies two forms of wit (*sal*) that are suitable to the plain style: *facetiae* and *dicacitas*. In *Orator*, *facetiae* is described as being utilized in narrative (*in narrando*) and is thus synonymous with Caesar's description of *cavillatio* from *De oratore* 218. *Dicacitas*, employed "in sending and casting forth a joke [*ridiculo*]" (*Or.* 87), retains the name and same pointed function first ascribed to it in *De oratore*.[84] The *ridiculum* in *Orator* is further subdivided and recommended for a speaker's use, but with a warning to avoid using a joke too frequently, too obscenely, too

84 *Or.* 87: *in iaciundo mittendoque ridiculo.* To translate *ridiculo* as "ridicule" lends an overwhelmingly derisive charge to the passage. A "laugh" in the modern, colloquial usage (i.e., "That's a laugh!") seems a more accurate translation.

petulantly, or otherwise on the wrong occasion or against the wrong personages; such misuse reflects poorly on the speaker (*Or*. 88). Cicero specifically cautions against allowing laughter to usurp the place of hatred when a crime is at issue: *admonemus tamen ridiculo sic usurum oratorem [. . .] nec in facinus ne odii locum risus occupet*.[85] His juxtaposition of laughter and hatred depicts laughter not as an expression of feelings (as it is in Plato *Resp.* 388e5-9) but as an emotion itself, a rare conflation by Cicero of the physical behavior of a laugh and the emotion(s) it may be thought to reflect.[86]

In any case, Cicero again establishes Aristotelian boundaries on desirable and undesirable approaches to laughter and the laughable, and he spends the bulk of the passage elaborating the undesirable approaches. The illiberal joke may reflect excess (e.g., jesting too frequently) or untimeliness (e.g., aiming for a laugh when the circumstances are too serious) or numerous other unsuitable elements. According to Cicero, this kind of joke has no place in oratory. The liberal joke, on the other hand, is what remains when the illiberal joke is excised from the picture (*quibus exceptis* in 89). Defined through negation, the liberal joke may be used when the improper speaker, audience, and venue are avoided. Because the liberal joke is not "positively" delineated and is only tacitly endorsed, the specter of Aristotle's βωμολόχος haunts Cicero's discussion in *Orator.* Cicero's treatment of the laughable, not unlike Aristotle's treatment of the figure embodying εὐτραπελία, is ultimately a comment upon the indecorous facets of the laughable.

Throughout much of the discussion of laughter in *De oratore*, Caesar focuses on occasions when orators should avoid "witticisms when there is no need for them" (*De or.* 2.229). Antonius, upon observing this tendency, articulates a desire to learn about when an orator should

85 *Or*. 88.

86 This apparent incongruity acquires even more resonance in Cicero's *De oratore*, where the discussion of laughter proceeds naturally from Antonius' comments on emotions.

make use of the laughable rather than avoid it.[87] Though Caesar obliges for the bulk of the discussion (especially the latter half from 2.250-90), he interrupts his early comments on "oratory-approved" laughter with several descriptions of inappropriate and undesirable uses of laughter. His initial preoccupation—seemingly involuntary—with warning against certain forms of laughter portrays laughter as distractingly volatile.

Take, for example, *De oratore* 2.240-3, wherein Caesar presents and endorses several examples of the clever (*facetum*) jest. He immediately transitions from this description of well-deployed wit to an illustration of poorly-provoked laughter. The three chapters that follow (2.244-7) are populated with predominantly negative examples of the laughable "in speech" (*in dicto*). Even when Caesar first establishes the domain of the laughable at *De oratore* 2.237-8, he invokes boundaries that anticipate those delineating the illiberal joke in *Orator* 88-89: "For neither manifest wickedness (and what is conjoined with crime) nor in turn manifest wretchedness, when stirred up, is laughed at: for people want wicked men to be wounded by some force greater than that of a joke; and they don't want wretched men to be mocked unless they are, by chance, boasters. [. . .] And so those things are most easily mocked which are worthy neither of great hatred nor of the greatest pity."[88] There are certain people and occasions that are unsuitable for laughter. Consequently, both of these passages (2.237 and 2.240-7) conclude with mentions of "restraint" (*moderatio* in 2.238 and 2.247).

Caesar's attention to restraint demonstrates that there are desirable occasions to arouse laughter which must be carefully distinguished from numerous undesirable occasions. The orator recognizes this and exercises all due caution and discipline in his use of laughter and the

87 *De or.* 2.229: *sed hoc praeceptum praetermittendarum est facetiarum, cum eis nihil opus sit; nos autem quomodo utamur, cum opus sit, querimus, ut in aduersarium [. . .].*

88 *nam nec insignis improbitas et scelere iuncta nec rursus miseria insignis agitata ridetur: facinerosos enim maiore quadam ui quam ridiculi uulnerari uolunt; miseros inludi nolunt, nisi se forte iactant. [. . .] itaque ea facillime luduntur, quae neque odio magno neque misericordia maxima digna sunt.*

laughable. The *scurra*, a figure Caesar contrasts with the *orator* in 2.247, does not.[89] The *scurra* is the Latin equivalent of a βωμολόχος—a buffoon, and Caesar's use of the Latin term (the only time the noun appears in *De oratore*) reveals Aristotle's imprint on this section of his argument.[90] Cicero, via Caesar, is gesturing toward a doctrine of the mean: a true *orator* exhibits *ratio*, *moderatio*, *temperantia*, and *raritas* (2.247) where the laughable is involved. Juxtaposed with the *scurra,* the Ciceronian orator cultivates only the appropriately laughable, and in so doing, he becomes the embodiment of Aristotelian εὐτραπελία (as it appears in the *Ethics*) or, alternatively, εἰρωνεία (from *Rh.* 1419b.5).

The most noteworthy exception to Caesar's call for *moderatio* in pursuit of laughter is the one that Caesar himself makes at 2.239, just as he has finished articulating his prohibition against jests on occasions when hatred or pity is the more appropriate response. "Also in ugliness and bodily faults there is agreeable enough material for joking; but we ask the same thing which must be asked in the other matters: to what extent? In this, not only is there a warning not to say something witless but also, if you can say something really funny, an orator must avoid two things: that the joke be either buffoonish or farcical."[91] In other words, it is fine to make fun of an ugly or disabled person . . . in a refined manner? In fact, yes. The physically unfortunate are fair game for mockery as long as some degree of restraint is observed. Of course, the notion is not

89 Caesar also uses forms of *scurrilis* in 2.244-6.

90 An argument could be made for the untranslatability of *scurra* based on a passage in Book 1 of *De natura deorum* wherein Cicero relates that Zeno of Sidon "said that Socrates himself, the father of philosophy, was an Attic *scurra*, and he used the Latin word"—*Zeno quidem* [. . .] *Socraten ipsum, parentem philosophiae, Latino uerbo utens scurram Atticum fuisse dicebat* (93).

91 *De or*. 2.238: *est etiam deformitatis et corporis uitiorum satis bella materies ad iocandum; sed quaerimus idem, quod in ceteris rebus maxime quaerendum est, quatenus; in quo non modo illud praecipitur, ne quid insulse, sed etiam, si quid perridicule possis, uitandum est oratori utrumque, ne aut scurrilis iocus sit aut mimicus.* Corbeill (1996) observes of this passage that "the directness with which Strabo introduces this new category, following as it does a careful delineation of how the orator should avoid mocking the unfortunate, indicates that the Romans could conceive of bodily deformities as a category separate from accidents of nature" (22). Corbeill uses additional passages from *De oratore* to argue (in pp. 23-30): 1) that the ultimate reason for restraint in Ciceronian discussions of physical peculiarities is rhetorical rather than ethical; and 2) that this is evidence of distinctly Roman values concerning physical deformities.

particularly agreeable to modern sensibilities. Caesar provides an example at 2.245 in anticipation of his second call for *moderatio* at 247. Philippus, in the course of a trial, asks permission to examine a witness whom Caesar describes as being of diminutive stature (*testis perpusillus*). The individual presiding over the trial says, "Only briefly," to which Philippus replies, "You'll find no fault; I'll ask very little" (*non accusabis; perpusillum rogabo*). Caesar acknowledges that the line was funny, but there was one problem: a juror for the case was even shorter than the witness, and "all the laughter was redirected against the juror—the joke seemed wholly buffoonish" (*omnis est risus in iudicem conuersus: uisum est totum scurrile ridiculum*).

The buffoonery was in the circumstances—not content, much like Aristotle's "flawed" laughter in the *Ethics*.[92] As Caesar presents the situation, even though Philippus' comment was laughed at, the laughter careened off of its intended target in the wrong direction, and Philippus should have held his tongue. That Philippus' cheap shot provoked laughter in the first place apparently warrants no further attention by Caesar. Physical shortcomings are depicted as innately laugh-worthy. Though Caesar does not mark these lines as a theoretical treatment of laughter, the explicit tolerance he grants to jokes that indicate *deformitas* and *corporis uitia* establishes this statement as a Latin antecedent of a "superiority theory" of laughter—more specifically the theory offered by Hobbes approximately 1700 years later. Hobbes asserts 1) that laughter arises when one person recognizes his own superiority "by comparison with the *infirmity* of others";[93] and 2) that people's laughter may be caused "by the apprehension of some *deformed* thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves."[94] Hobbes' use of the words "infirmity" and "deformed" is ambiguous insofar as the words are not exclusively physiological; they may also be applied to moral deficiencies. Nevertheless, both

92 Cf. Corbeill (1996) 29: "Strabo implies that Philippus' witticism would have been perfectly appropriate under other conditions."
93 Hobbes (1840) 46. *Human Nature*, Ch. 9, para. 13. The emphasis is mine.
94 Hobbes (1839) 46. *Leviathan*, Pt. 1, Ch. 6, para. 42. The emphasis is mine.

words vividly describe the physical realm, with "deformed" carrying a particularly visual, and implicitly corporeal, resonance.

In Caesar's anecdote recounting Philippus' courtroom comment, physical shortcomings are treated as a potential source of an easy, derisive laugh. It is irrelevant that an individual displaying such faults may not be responsible for them. At 2.262, Caesar recounts a case in which Crassus insulted a trial opponent, Lamia,[95] whom Caesar himself describes as *deformis*: "'Let us hear,' Crassus said, 'the pretty boy.' When the laughter had died down, Lamia said, 'I was not able to fashion my looks, but I was able to fashion my intellect.' Then Crassus said, 'Let us hear the clever boy,' at which the laughter was far more aggressive."[96] The ridicule is devastatingly thorough. Lamia is first laughed at for being *deformis*. When he tries to diffuse the laughter by disavowing responsibility for his physical appearance, he directs attention to his own intellect. Then his intellect is immediately disparaged by Crassus. The laughter that follows is all the more hardy. Caesar does not present Crassus as having done anything wrong. In the course of staging the story, Caesar even plants an excuse for the sharpness of Crassus' comment by pointing out that Lamia had been obnoxiously interrupting Crassus. After telling the story, Caesar observes, "Indeed those things (*sc*. comments) are charming, whether in serious expressions or, as here, in witty ones."

As the name of the superiority theory of laughter implies, people laugh at what is inferior —what is "below them." In the case of Philippus' deliberate insult of the *testis perpusillus* and unintentional insult of a juror in the trial, the men being laughed at are quite literally below those who laugh with regard to physical stature. Certainly the superiority theory does not rely upon an actual, spatial interpretation of superiority, but the illustration is nonetheless helpful. The

95 I thank Jim Zetzel for pointing out the additional layer of the joke in Lamia's "monstrous" name.

96 *"Audiamus" inquit "pulchellum puerum" Crassus; cum esset arrisum, "non potui mihi" inquit Lamia "formam ipse fingere, ingenium potui"; tum hic "audiamus" inquit "disertum": multo etiam arrisum est uehementius.*

superiority theory depicts laughter as traveling "downward," and, as the examples presented by Cicero's Caesar attest, this laughter, in attacking flaws for which an individual may not even be responsible, is far from friendly. But Caesar only presents this "downward" laughter as one type of laughter which is offered in response to a particular brand of jokes. As noted above, the relief theory of laughter is also at work in many of his examples involving laughter. In the final thirty chapters of the *excursus de ridiculis* in *De oratore*, Cicero examines another explanation for laughter that does not appear as an explicit theory in Plato and is only hinted at in Aristotle.

At 2.248 of Cicero's *De oratore*, Caesar begins to classify and enumerate the many rhetorical maneuvers that provoke laughter. The remainder of the discussion comprises his catalog, which Janko (1984) divides as follows:

A. From diction	B. From content
1. The ambiguous (amphibolia)	1. Narratives (fables, anecdotes)
2. The unexpected	2. Comparisons
3. Word-play (παρονομασία)	3. Mimicry or caricature
4. Quotation of verses, proverbs	4. Exaggeration or understatement
5. Taking words literally	5. The telling detail
6. Allegory	6. Irony
7. Metaphor	7. Innuendo
8. Irony	8. Assumed incomprehension
9. Antithetical expressions	9. Hinted ridicule
	10. The illogical
	11. Personal retorts.

Although Janko considers these subheadings to be approximations, they represent a rather exhaustive treatment of the passage.[97] Caesar does not offer any particular subheading as a theory unto itself, but a broader theory begins to takes shape as he utilizes the same explanation for several different sources of laughter. I would like to direct particular attention to numbers 2 and 5 in the "From diction" column and to number 10 in the "From content" column. These "sources of

97 Janko (1984) 165. Most, though not all, of Janko's subheadings appear to come from the marginal passage titles offered in Sutton and Rackham's Loeb edition (1942) of *De oratore: Books I and II*.

laughter" play upon defied expectations; the audience expects one thing and the orator says another.

At *De oratore* 255, Caesar makes his first explicit case for the laughter-raising potential of frustrated expectations: "But you know that the best known source of the laughable is when we expect one thing and another is said. Here our mistake (*noster error*) provokes laughter for our very selves. And if ambiguity is also mixed in, it becomes wittier."[98] He immediately shares an example of defied expectations that are enhanced by wit, and to designate this particular genre of the laughable, he uses the phrase *illud genus ridiculi praeter exspectationem*—"that type of joke that is contrary to expectation".[99] The phrase *praeter exspectationem*, in addition to being a concise description of Caesar's previous example, also seems to appear in the earliest extant Latin rhetorical work: the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.[100] When the author of this work suggests that raising a laugh can function as an apt ice breaker for the orator toiling with a fatigued audience, the phrase *praete*r *expectatione*m appears within a list of possible ways to provoke laughter.[101] The syntax of the passage is challenging, a difficulty compounded by the uncertainty of the text (the division into two words are editors' suggestions; the manuscripts read *praeterexpectatione*).[102] Despite these textual problems, one confidently assumes that the author

98 *Sed scitis esse notissimum ridiculi genus, cum aliud exspectamus, aliud dicitur: hic nobismet ipsis noster error risum mouet: quod si admixtum est etiam ambiguum, fit salsius.*

99 *De or.* 255.

100 It is tempting to identify this phrase as a calque for παρὰ προσδοκίαν (e.g., the subheading in Sutton and Rackham's Loeb translation (1942) 389 and the note in Achard's Budé translation (1997) 10, n. 48), but the Greek phrase is not attested with certainty before Cicero. The phrase appears in a rhetorical context in Demetrius' *On Style* (Ch. 152: Ἔστι δέ τις καὶ ἡ παρὰ προσδοκίαν χάρις), but the dating of Demetrius' rhetorical work is a matter of considerable debate. Grube (1964) maintains that *On Style* should be dated to approximately 270 B.C.E., while other scholars have tended toward a date in the Common Era (for which see the summary of the scholarship in Paffenroth (1994) 280, n. 2 and her own conclusion that the text's composition should be dated to the first century C.E. (281)). Chiron (2001) thoroughly examines all previous scholarly arguments as well as the text itself and advocates for a date of composition in the first century B.C.E. before the Latin rhetorical works appeared (371). The Greek phrase also appears in the Alexandrian scholia of Aristophanes's works, but it is used to refer simply to defied expectations with no apparent rhetorical resonance.

101 *Rhet. Her*. 1.10.

102 Editors' (Marx (1964) and Achard (1997)) willingness to emend the text to *praeter exspectationem* may stem from the modern acceptance of *paraprosdokian* as a rhetorical term. Unless these two Latin words together were already regarded as a rhetorical trope (functioning effectively as an indeclinable noun), their appearance in list

is writing about laughter provoked by an unexpected (*praeter exspectationem*) saying or behavior. Appearing alongside this source of laughter in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium's* list are terms that also appear in *De oratore*: *imitatio deprauata* occurs in *De oratore* 242 and falls under number 3 of Janko's "From content" column, and *ambiguum* occurs in *De oratore* 255, quoted above, and falls under number 1 of Janko's "From diction" column. Though Cicero's list of laughter's sources in *De oratore* and the more concise list that appears in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* are far from identical, their occasional overlap raises intriguing—and ultimately unanswerable—questions. Did Cicero use the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* in his composition of *De oratore*? Or do the two works share a common source? Would this source have been in Greek or Latin? We may receive a clue in Chapter 11 of Book 3 of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, wherein Aristotle refers in different ways to defy expectations (e.g., τοῦ προσεξαπατᾶν and παρὰ τὸ ἐναντίως in 1412a20 and 1412a21, respectively) but does not use any single phrase with the consistency that would mark it as a set phrase or shorthand for a widely-held rhetorical trope. The germ of the trope is nevertheless present in Aristotle, and even if no other Greek treatment of a genre of the laughable that so concisely conveys the notion "contrary to expectation" can be confidently dated before the appearance of *praeter exspectationem* in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and *De oratore*, it is unlikely that the idea of defying expectations never coalesced into a set rhetorical device in the interim between Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. It is nevertheless tempting to credit Cicero, through his repeated use of the term in *De oratore* (as will be seen below), with the popularization of the concept in Latin rhetorical literature.

Five chapters after his first example of a joke that is *praeter exspectationem*, Caesar explains why some people consider it witty "when you seem to understand something according

form as in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is ungrammatical. The *apparatus criticus* of Marx's Teubner (1964) notes Schuetz addition of *dicto* (8)—a grammatically sound emendation that provides an anchor for the prepositional phrase.

to the word (*ad uerbum*), not the sense (*ad sententiam*)."[103] He then warns that jokes that rely upon taking a statement literally can be "either chilly or, when something else is expected (*cum aliud exspectatum*), then witty". He continues: "For, as I said before, our mistake (*noster . . . error*) naturally delights us: on account of which, when we have been deceived, so to speak, by our expectations (*cum quasi decepti sumus exspectatione*), we laugh."[104] *Error* plays an explanatory role in both of these examples, as the individual who laughs has prepared for one event only to be met by a different one.

Caesar shares an extended example of laughter provoked by defied expectations near the end of the discussion, and, much as at *De oratore* 255, he declares that this source of laughter is exceptional: *sed ex his omnibus nihil magis ridetur, quam quod est praeter exspectationem, cuius innumerabilia sunt exempla* ("But of all these examples, nothing is laughed at more than what is contrary to expectation, of which countless examples exist").[105] The final anecdote he offers to illustrate this point is again from the courtroom. In cross-examining a witness named Silus who testified to having heard something damning of the defendant, Crassus asks the witness two questions introduced by "Is it possible that . . ." (*potest* (*fieri*) *ut*). Silus readily agrees to both possibilities Crassus puts forth—that he may have heard his evidence from someone speaking in anger or that he may have misunderstood; he seems eager to cast doubt on his own testimony and diminish its potential influence. Then Crassus asks Silus a third question: "'Is it even possible,' he said, 'that, indeed, what you say you heard, you never heard at all?'"[106] Caesar immediately opines on the completed anecdote, "This was so unexpected (*praeter exspectationem*) that

103 This idea is anticipated in Aristotle's reference to ἐν τοῖς γελοίοις τὰ παραπεποιημένα (*Rhet*. 1412A28).

104 *De or*. 260: *haec aut frigida sunt aut tum salsa, cum aliud est exspectatum. natura enim nos, ut ante dixi, noster delectat error: ex quo, cum quasi decepti sumus exspectatione, ridemus.* Caesar's apologetic use of *decepti* draws out a peculiar component of certain occasions of defied expectations in oratory: a speaker is required, in some sense, to dissimulate—to create expectations with the intention of leaving them unfulfilled.

105 *De or*. 284.

106 *De or*. 285: *"potest etiam fieri," inquit "ut omnino, quod te audisse dicis, numquam audieris."*

everyone's laughter overwhelmed the witness."[107]

The link between a comment that is *praeter exspectationem* and universal laughter (*omnium risus*)—or *nearly* universal laughter, because the witness Silus presumably did not laugh—is stated causally. In all of his examples that invoke the phrase *praeter exspectationem*, Cicero's Caesar makes clear that defied expectations are a common source of laughter. This causal link between the unexpected and laughter is the most thorough ancient version of what is popularly called the "incongruity theory" of laughter, a theory which is commonly attributed to considerably later thinkers, such as Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer, and is still adapted to suit more recent linguistic theories of laughter.[108] In *Critique of Judgment*, Kant offers the following formulation of the incongruity theory: "In everything that is to excite a lively convulsive laugh there must be something absurd (in which the Understanding, therefore, can find no satisfaction). *Laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing*."[109] It will be immediately clear that there is a practical problem with this theory insofar as laughter is not the only potential response to defied expectations. If a young child expects a new bicycle as a birthday gift and instead receives a book, any parent will be lucky to hear laughter after the present has been opened. Similarly, an unexpected death rarely occasions laughter.

Whatever the shortcomings of the incongruity theory of laughter, its prototypical

107 *De or.* 285: *hoc ita praeter exspectationem accidit, ut testem omnium risus obrueret.* With the punch-line delayed until the final clause and packed into just two words (*numquam audieris*), Caesar's retelling preserves the surprise of Crassus' words for his own audience. Of course his efforts are perhaps unnecessary: Crassus himself is a participant in the discussion and probably had not forgotten his own unexpected turn of phrase. Moreover, it is likely that many—if not all—of Caesar's interlocutors, through some previous familiarity with the story, whether personal or second-hand, would have been "expecting the unexpected". Thus the audience most susceptible to surprise by Caesar's anecdote would have been the readership. Such an argument could be made for many of the laugh-worthy stories that Caesar recounts, but in maintaining the chronology of this particular episode and describing it in such detail, Cicero (via Caesar) aims to recreate the response with which Crassus' comments were first received: *omnium risus*. Such rhetorical maneuvering by the author of a text is explored in the following chapter exploring laughter and reader response.

108 Attardo (2009).

109 Kant (2007) 133. Textual emphases are his.

appearance in Cicero's *De oratore* is undisputed. Thus all three trends that have assumed the status of canonical theories of laughter in modern research on laughter and humor are adumbrated in the Ciceronian text. Cicero's recognition that superiority, relief, and incongruity all offer occasional explanations for laughter—even if his strongest statements tend to emphasize notions of superiority—also functions as a tacit acknowledgment from antiquity that no one of these theories is a sufficient explanation of laughter unto itself. And when such figures as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Hobbes, Freud, and Kant have somehow been unable to explain laughter in any comprehensive sense, it seems best to conclude that the question of laughter is perhaps too big and too complex for answering with a single theory, if at all.[110] Therefore, I will take a different approach and will consider the complex question of laughter through the lens of literature. In the chapters to follow, I explore how laughter can direct reader response and can reflect and create generic identity in select works of Vergil, Horace, and Ovid.

110 Stewart (1994) concludes his "sketch" of laughter among the Greek philosophers with the following paragraph: "It has become clear to me that we cannot think simply about laughter in general, but we must think about laughter *at* a person, laughter *at* a thing, laughter *with* a person, laughter *about* a person and about an event, laughter in reaction to *words*, laughter in reaction to *tickling* [. . .], laughter which spreads from person to person by a kind of contagion or infection, and finally that mysterious laughter [. . .] that arises when we feel that all is going well and we are happy in our world. Surely no single cause can be found, no single theory can be devised, that will explain this vast phenomenon of laughter" (37).

PART I: *RIDERE* RESPONSE (CHAPTERS 1, 2, AND 3)

LAUGHTER AS LITERARY CRITICISM

The presence of laughter in a text, whether narrated ("She giggled sweetly.") or represented ("Hahaha!"), invites a distinct brand of reader involvement and interpretation. Just as heads turn toward an outburst of laughter in a crowded room, readers naturally want to know why someone in a text is laughing. What is the "story" behind a snicker or snort? Of course, the story of a literary laugh is a variable script, and a snicker comes from a different place than a snort. Yet the idea that a laugh "comes from" someplace else demonstrates the common perception that laughs—textual or otherwise—are "caused"; they follow from a statement, an action, or, in the most general case, a tone or atmosphere within a work. As a result, laughter may be anticipated long before a given laugh becomes textually manifest. Another consequence of laughter's presumed existence in a causal chain is that, when an unexpected laugh bursts forth from a text, a reader may read back from the occasion of textual laughter in order to determine its origin. In the following three chapters, I consider occasions of textual laughter in Vergil's, Horace's, and Ovid's poems, and I propose ways in which these laughs can be fruitfully unpacked through a focus on reader response. The question that drives my explorations is, "Why would a reader laugh at a text?" This approach to reader-oriented literary criticism through the lens of laughter emphasizes that the vocabulary of laughter and the risible deployed by the foremost Augustan poets often functions as an inbuilt critical mechanism—a set of directions for how to respond to a text.

The fact that laughter's presence in a work may invite readers into a unique interpretive dialogue with that text was well known to such a studied orator and politician as Cicero. His *excursus de ridiculis*, discussed in the introduction, sets forth the practical value of provoking

laughter in a rhetorical setting. The characters involved in the discussion in Book II of *De oratore* are political figures to whom the power of eliciting an audience's laughter is well known. These speakers recognize laughter's ability to create and enforce identity as well as its inherent risks and volatility. The topic of humor (and, to a lesser extent, laughter) in oratory has been explored rewardingly and at length by scholars of political invective.[1] Laughter's relationship to literary criticism in general and reader response more specifically has not received the same attention.[2]

I consider, in the course of the following three chapters, two answers to the question of why a reader would laugh at a text. The first answer is found in the words of an Augustan poet himself when Horace, in his literary epistles, suggests that people in general, and literary critics more specifically, laugh at what is bad. Poets regard laughter as an indictment or (more rarely) a seal of approval. This indictment or approval may speak volumes about the generic context in which it appears or about the individual who offers it, but, in the current chapter and to the extent possible, I set aside these genre and narratological concerns and examine the use of laughter and the laughable as instruments of aesthetic critique.[3] An exhaustive treatment of "critical laughter," even within the restricted corpus of Augustan poetry, would prove tedious and repetitive, but the Horatian examples I explore in Chapter 1 reveal a poetic awareness of the unique nature of laughter: a single behavior that can be utilized for multiple, even conflicting, critical responses.

The second response to the question of why a reader would laugh in response to a text is one I outline throughout Chapters 2 and 3. I investigate Vergil's, Horace's, and Ovid's use of laughter as a form of metacommunication, a term Amy Richlin adopts in *The Garden of Priapus*

1 Corbeill (1996) focuses on humor in the political sphere during the Late Roman Republic.
2 The reasons are more straightforward than one may suspect. The occasional nature of a political speech and the patent need to persuade an audience make the practical value of humor and/or laughter in such speeches more apparent.
3 In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I examine laughter's relationship to genre.

to refer to an indirect relay of information that draws upon readers' expectations and knowledge of literary traditions.[4] In the case of laughter, I hypothesize that the presence of laughter *in* a poem offers information about the suitability of a laugh *as a response to* the poem. A reader's laughter may be encouraged when a laugh occurring within the text demonstrates that something under discussion warrants laughter, whether that specific something is clever or absurd or worthy of scorn. Conversely, laughter could be discouraged if the textual laughter were revealed to be somehow inappropriate for the occasion. In both cases, a laugh becomes a subtle vehicle for encouraging or deterring a specific response on the part of the reader. Metacommunicative laughter makes it possible, if only momentarily, for the author (or speaker) to "drive the bus" of interpretation.

4 Richlin (1992) 64 argues that a poem's meter functions as a form of metacommunication to the extent that it conveys immediate and important information about the poem's expected content.

CHAPTER 1: LAUGHING MATTERS

LAUGHTER AND NEGATIVE CRITICISM IN HORACE'S LITERARY EPISTLES

The *Ars Poetica*, one member of the small family of works of explicit ancient literary theory, offers an attractive starting-point for a discussion of poetic criticism during the Augustan era.[1] Horace's work is composed in verse and treats verse as the primary object of criticism, yet he begins the poem with a surprising analogy from the visual arts (vv. 1-5):

> *humano capiti ceruicem pictor equinam*
> *iungere si uelit et uarias inducere plumas*
> *undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum*
> *desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,*
> *spectatum admissi, risum teneatis, amici?* 5
>
> If a painter should wish to connect an equine neck
> to a human head and to introduce variegated feathers
> to limbs gathered from everywhere, so that a woman
> beautiful on top would taper repulsively into a black fish,
> after being allowed to look on, friends, would you repress a laugh? 5

Horace creates a monster. The amalgamation sprawls across four lines with words entangled around one another and extra limbs (Greek κῶλα or Latin *membra*[2]) tacked into the middle of the description. The tortured word order and syntax graphically represent the incongruous appearance of the imagined painting. The response imagined to greet this spectacle is a laugh, as *risum* sits conspicuously in the middle of verse 5, set off by a strong metrical caesura after *admissi*. Laughter is the first indicator of critical judgment in the *Ars Poetica*. But why a laugh, and what does it tell us about how Horace expects his addressees (or readers) to interpret the hypothetical painting?

1 See Laird, ed. (2006) *xi-xii* for a list of texts of ancient literary criticism spanning from Homer to Augustine. A more conservative selection could be effected by restricting the list to complete works rather than passages within works, though this would subject such a fundamental text as Aristotle's *Poetics* to the risk of exclusion because of the lost second book. In any case, the fact that Horace's *Ars Poetica* is in verse makes it all the more exceptional.

2 LSJ s.v. κῶλον A.II (3): "Rhet., member or clause of a περίοδος." Cf. Cic. *Or.* 211.

The laugh, or rather, its suppression, is posed as a question ("Would you repress a laugh?"), the answer to which is an implied "No."[3] The painting is presumed laugh-worthy, and powerfully so. What stimulates the laughter is implicitly forceful. Horace, however, uses no word for "good" or "bad" in these first lines, nor does he adopt any other consistent vocabulary to convey aesthetic evaluation. The term *turpiter* appears in v. 3, but is offset by *formosa* in v. 4. *Risus*, unmodified by adjective or adverb, functions as its own critical expression. Its charge is established through context.

That the question of restrained laughter in v. 5 designates the painting as objectionable is eventually confirmed (vv. 6-22):

credite, Pisones, isti tabulae fore librum
persimilem, cuius, uelut aegri somnia, uanae
fingentur species, ut nec pes nec caput uni
reddatur formae. "pictoribus atque poetis
quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas." 10
scimus, et hanc ueniam petimusque damusque uicissim,
sed non ut placidis coeant immitia, non ut
serpentes auibus geminentur, tigribus agni.
inceptis grauibus plerumque et magna professis
purpureus, late qui splendeat, unus et alter 15
adsuitur pannus, cum lucus et ara Dianae
et properantis aquae per amoenos ambitus agros
aut flumen Rhenum aut pluuius describitur arcus;
sed nunc non erat his locus. et fortasse cupressum
scis simulare; quid hoc, si fractis enatat exspes 20
nauibus, aere dato qui pingitur? amphora coepit
institui; currente rota cur urceus exit?

Believe, Pisones, that this painting would be similar to
a book, whose appearances, like the dreams
of a sick man, are fashioned fleeting, so neither foot nor head
are rendered in one form. "To painters and poets

3 Rudd (1997) 121 translates *teneatis* as if referring to ability: "[C]ould you stifle your laughter?" However, the standard translation of a future-less-vivid (or "future 'ideal'") conditional typically employs "would" in the apodosis: cf. Woodcock (1959) Sect. 193. The difference between the two interpretations is not trivial, but to either question ("would"/"could"), the same response is nevertheless understood. My translation ("would") grants a greater role to an individual's will to either constrain or express laughter, thus allowing laughter to function more voluntarily. This "voluntary" interpretation resonates with the critical behavior of laughter in the passage.

has always been granted equal power of whatever daring."
We know, and we seek and grant this pardon in turn.
But not so that rough may mingle with calm, not so that
serpents may pair with bird, sheep with tigers.
To grand beginnings in general and those declaring great things,
the one and other purple patch which shines far and wide
is patched on, when a grove and an altar of Diana
and the winding of water rushing through lovely fields
or the river Rhine or a rainbow is described.
But this was not the place for these things. Perhaps you know how
to paint a cypress; what of it, if the man paid to be painted
hopelessly swimming from his shattered ship? An amphora
is begun; why does a mug come off the spinning wheel?

Horace draws a connection between the painting and a book that exhibits the same incongruous characteristics, and the words *aegri* and *uanae* (v. 6) hint at the undesirability of both. The negative criticism continues with Horace's confession that poets seek pardon (*ueniam* in v. 11) for their daring creations. A claim of pardon presumes an offense to be pardoned. In vv. 12-3, the negative result clauses describe scenarios that Horace would like to avoid, and these descriptions are reminiscent of the incongruous monstrosity of the opening verses. With each new sentence after the rhetorical question in v. 5, the readers who answered "No" and admitted their inability to refrain from laughing are granted reasons to become more confident with that response. Horace remains nonetheless vague, rapidly shifting between images and posing questions back to back (as in vv. 19-22) without providing explicit answers. Only in v. 23 does Horace convey his standards for creation in a positive manner: *denique sit quiduis, simplex dumtaxat et unum*—"In short, let it be anything you want, so long as it is simple and one." Singularity and unity are Horace's professed ideals, but the reader does not have to wait until verse 23 to learn that the description with which the *Ars* begins falls short of the ideal. The laughter of verse 5 sets this ball rolling.

One might wonder how the reader knows to answer "No, I would not repress a laugh" in v. 5. Has Horace tapped into a universal point of critical agreement even before articulating it? A

reader familiar with Plato's and Aristotle's appeals to unity in the context of art criticism could identify that the unnatural image of vv. 1-5 is not in keeping with certain Greek critical standards.[4] Yet Greek, Etruscan, and Roman artists deliberately and painstakingly created representations of hybrid entities like gorgons, sphinxes, chimaerae, harpies, and Scylla. On the one hand, an encounter with a lifelike artistic representation of a composite entity like the one described by Horace would not be as dangerous or life-threatening as an actual run-in with any of the aforementioned monsters; Horace's "beast" lacks any means to attack.[5] Nevertheless, a viewer's ability to approach a painted grotesque like the one in *Ars Poetica* vv. 1-5 without risk of bodily harm could prompt an emotional or psychological response similar to that associated with viewing an unapproachable monster at close quarters: an apotropaic relief.[6] When the viewer recognizes her ultimate safety and identifies the disconnect between feeling threatened and being threatened, this moment of recognition could move her to laugh.[7] She does not laugh *despite* coming face to face(s) with the hybrid image but *because* of the encounter.

But this laughter, should it occur, and which could just as easily be provoked by the representation of a threatening beast that *actually* exists, is not at all like the laughter that Horace

4 Brink (1963) 78 briefly summarizes Plato's mentions of "wholeness" in *Gorgias* 503e-4a and *Phaedrus* 263-4 while pointing out that the Platonic criticism is not exclusively applied to poetry. Nevertheless, at *Phaedrus* 264c, Plato has Socrates urge against a "headless" or "footless" argument with a negative result clause (ὥστε μήτε ἀκέφαλον εἶναι μήτε ἄπουν)—a passage to which Horace undoubtedly alludes in v. 8-9 (*ut nec pes nec caput uni / reddatur formae*). Aristotle in his *Poetics* defines a tragedy as being a representation of some perfect and whole (ὅλον) happening of a certain magnitude (1450b23-5).

5 One might compare the chimaera, a divine, fire-breathing monster with the head of a lion, the body of a goat (with a goat's head coming out of the back—this second head breathes fire), and the tail of a headed-serpent or dragon. So ingrained, even in modern aesthetics, is a resistance to incongruity that some scholars assert that the beast was illogical or laughable. Roes (1934) 21 states that "to the eye the image is as objectionable as to the mind," though she apparently operates on the assumption that the goat head must have been unidirectional. In his article from the *OCD* s.v. *chimaera*, Alan Griffiths observes, "[I]n art the eponymous central head (sometimes a protome with forefeet) which protrudes uneasily from the lion's back may be made less risible by allowing it to perform the fire-breathing which Homer and Hesiod describe." Both Roes and Griffiths seem to miss the point that the monster must have been all but impossible to attack, with the lion fighting in front, the snake in back, and the goat covering the flanks by spitting fire.

6 Clarke (2007) 63-81 treats apotropaic laughter with attention to "often misshapen and hypersexual" images like the evil eye and phalloi (67). The grinning faces of gorgons are unfortunately absent from his study.

7 See the introduction for explanations of the relief and incongruity theories of laughter.

rhetorically summons in v. 5. Horace's amalgam differs from a gorgon, sphinx, chimaera, harpy, and, despite some similarities, even from Scylla herself, because all of these other monsters are *supposed* to be incongruous.[8] This particular painting, at least as Horace portrays it in the opening verses of the *Ars Poetica*, should not. The fifteen lines after Horace raises his question of laughter show him reflecting upon unity and coherence in a variety of media, although his brief comments (vv. 21-2) on pottery are particularly telling: "An amphora / is begun; why does a mug come off the spinning wheel?" (*amphora coepit* / *institui; currente rota cur urceus exit?*). The intention of the artist is implicitly relevant insofar as the mug—as a mug—may be beautiful. The failure lies in the fact that the end product does not resemble its beginning.

With his declaration in v. 23 that a work should be *simplex* . . . *et unum*, Horace retrojects a final qualitative evaluation onto the disjointed painting from the poem's opening. The painting is bad—κακός, just not the evil κακός of a monstrous beast, like Homer's chimaera (*Il*. 6.155-203) or Vergil's Scylla (*Aen*. 3.420-432). Horace presents an aesthetic κακός that invites a critical response: a laugh of superiority. To use the words offered by Cicero's Caesar in *De oratore* 2.238, the incongruous image described in vv. 1-5 of the *Ars Poetica* is a manifestation of *deformitas* (ugliness) and *corporis uitia* (bodily faults). The unintended lack of coherence in the painter's creation is itself a *uitium*, and this *uitium* provokes laughter.

Quintilian draws the connection between physical faults and aesthetic ones when he interprets Horace's passage in his *Institutio Oratoria*:

> *cui simile uitium est apud nos si quis sublimia humilibus, uetera nouis, poetica uulgaribus misceat—id enim tale monstrum quale Horatius in prima parte libri de arte poetica fingit: "humano capiti ceruicem pictor equinam iungere si uelit" et cetera ex diuersis naturis subiciat.* (*Inst*. 8.3.60)

8 A viewer expects incongruity when looking at a representation of Scylla; internal incongruity defines the monster, with the paradox being that a congruently rendered Scylla—e.g., an image of a "unified" woman labeled "Scylla"—would actually be incongruent with a viewer's expectations ("externally incongruous"). On the opening image as evoking Scylla, see Oliensis (1991) 107-109.

> A defect similar to this is before us if someone mixes the lofty with the lowly, the old with the new, the poetic with the vulgar—for it is such a monster which Horace fashions in the first part of his *Ars Poetica*: "If a painter should wish to connect an equine neck / to a human head" and he appends other things of various natures.

The *uitium* to which such mixtures of diction are compared (i.e., the antecedent to the relative pronoun *cui*) is the blending of dialects, which Quintilian calls *sardismos*.[9] Quintilian lists stylistic "dos and don'ts," and like Horace, the bulk of his observations pertain to rhetorical and literary criticism. Here he states in no uncertain terms that the mixing of unlike things—vocabulary from different registers—is in fact a *uitium*, and by way of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, he uses artistic and poetic criticism as points of reference. Laughter goes unmentioned in this passage, but Quintilian demonstrates his own agreement with Horace's sentiments when it comes to word-choice. Let a work be *simplex . . . et unum*. If it is not, one can imagine Quintilian asking his readership: *risum teneatis*?[10]

My conclusion that Horace, in the opening lines of the poem, offers criticism as a primary function of laughter may be anticlimactic in light of the foregoing discussion of monsters and incongruity. Even in the initial reading of v. 5 it seemed evident that incongruous creations can lead to laughter. As is often the case with Horace, however, the matter is not so *simplex*, and we will return to this passage at the end of Chapter 3 for further interpretation. For now it is sufficient to mark as our point of departure that Horace recognizes laughter's power as a critical tool and, more specifically, an indicator of negative criticism. This power of laughter is invoked elsewhere in the *Ars Poetica*, and its function takes on a more definitive critical shape as the Horatian voice explores other perspectives of the literary-critical composer, or the "poet-critic."[11]

---

9 *Inst.* 8.3.60.

10 At *Inst*. 8.3.48, Quintilian makes a similar criticism about calling things by incongruous names, but he allows it if the intention of the speaker is to raise a laugh.

11 Brink (1963) 153. Brink distinguishes between 1) "external" critics who write about poetry without producing poetry and 2) "poet-critics" who play the dual role of writing poetry and writing *about* poetry. Brink identifies Horace's *Ars Poetica* as the work of a poet-critic *par excellence*. Horace's occasional disavowal of the title "poet" is examined in Chapter 4.

During a discussion of poetic aesthetics and their impact on emotion in vv. 99-113 of the *Ars Poetica*, Horace turns repeatedly to laughter:

non satis est pulchra esse poemata; dulcia sunto,
et quocumque uolent animum auditoris agunto. 100
ut ridentibus adrident, ita flentibus adflent
humani uultus. si uis me flere, dolendum est
primum ipsi tibi; tum tua me infortunia laedent,
Telephe uel Peleu; male si mandata loqueris,
aut dormitabo aut ridebo. tristia maestum 105
uultum uerba decent, iratum plena minarum,
ludentem lasciua, seuerum seria dictu.
format enim natura prius nos intus ad omnem
fortunarum habitum; iuuat aut impellit ad iram
aut ad humum maerore graui deducit et angit; 110
post effert animi motus interprete lingua.
si dicentis erunt fortunis absona dicta,
Romani tollent equites peditesque cachinnum.

It's not sufficient for poems to be pretty; let them be sweet,
and let them lead the heart of the hearer wherever they wish. 100
As human faces laugh with those laughing, so they cry with those crying.
If you want me to cry, you yourself must be pained first;
then your misfortunes will wound me, Telephus
or Peleus; if you will have spoken scripted words poorly,
I'll either nod off or laugh. Grim words befit 105
a gloomy face, ones full of threats befit an angry one,
wanton ones a playful one, serious speech a stern one.
For nature first shapes us internally for every state
of fortune; either it delights or drives to anger
or forces us to the ground and chokes us with heavy grief; 110
Then she bears out the mind's movements with tongue as interpreter.
If a speaker's words are out of tune with his fortunes,
the Roman knights and infantry will raise a cackle.

Horace reminds the Pisones of poetry's ability to move an audience—an ability he presents as a mandate (*agunto* in v. 100).[12] He invokes the infectiousness of laughter: human faces behave sympathetically, laughing at laughter and weeping at weeping. Any sense of "acting" as "pretending" is absent. The poet-actor must first feel the emotion he aims to convey (*dolendum*

12 Grant and Fiske (1924) 32 acutely observe that Horace calques on the Greek rhetorical ideal of ψυχαγωγεῖν with *animum . . . agunto* in v. 100. See also Brink (1963) 184.

est / *primum* in vv. 103-4). Only then will an audience see his face or hear his words in the proper light. The passage loosely echoes Plato's *Ion* where the young rhapsode declares, "Whenever I say something pitiful, my eyes are filled with tears; and whenever I say something frightening or terrible, my hair stands straight up with fear and my heart leaps."[13] In a precursor to modern "method acting," Ion speaks of an actor who is sympathetic with the character (or, at least, with the verses through which the character is represented). Horace's formulation differs. He requires the emotion to be accessed first in order for the external manifestation to be persuasive (*primum* . . . *tum* in v. 103).

The transition between the internal/emotional and the external/physical becomes cyclical when the audience is taken into consideration. The external displays of an actor, his visage and words together (and the two must necessarily be in accordance, as in vv. 105-7), communicate an antecedent internal state. This external communication creates a feedback loop in Horace's promised response to poorly delivered lines: *male si mandata loqueris,* / *aut dormitabo aut ridebo* (vv. 104-5). The audience, comprised of humans subject to the same *natura* (v. 108) as the actors, will demonstrate an internal, critical response in a physical manner—here, with the sleep or laughter promised by Horace, who styles himself a stand-in for an audience.[14] The physical behavior expresses an emotional or intellectual response, and laughter is one such behavior communicating a negative assessment. Similarly, Horace hypothesizes a situation in vv. 112-3 in which the words of an actor are inconsistent with his condition. The inevitable result: universal guffaws. The laughter of v. 113, charged as the term *cachinnus* already is with connotations of loud volume and abrasiveness, becomes overwhelming when shared among all the theater attendees, front-row and nose-bleed sections alike (*equites peditesque* in v. 113). As in the

13 Plat. *Ion* 535c5-8: ἐγὼ γὰρ ὅταν ἐλεινόν τι λέγω, δακρύων ἐμπίμπλανταί μου οἱ ὀφθαλμοί· ὅταν τε φοβερὸν ἢ δεινόν, ὀρθαὶ αἱ τρίχες ἵστανται ὑπὸ φόβου καὶ ἡ καρδία πηδᾷ.

14 Funke (1976) 198 observes that Plato's Ion also recognizes laughter as a response to bad oral presentation ("schlechten Vortrag") in 535e4-6.

opening of the *Ars Poetica*, Horace does not draw explicit attention to what an audience thinks but to what an audience does. A physical response rather than an abstract internal assessment—or, more accurately, a physical response *as a representation of internal assessment*—attracts his attention. Laughter is a fitting reaction to bad poetry, regardless of whether that poetry is poorly composed or poorly delivered.[15]

In a passage from the latter half of the *Ars Poetica* (vv. 354-360), Horace confirms the status of laughter as a form of negative criticism. He utilizes laughter to comment on the extent to which poetic shortcomings should be forgiven:

> *ut scriptor si peccat idem librarius usque,*
> *quamuis est monitus, uenia caret; ut citharoedus* 355
> *ridetur, chorda qui semper oberrat eadem;*
> *sic mihi, qui multum cessat, fit Choerilus ille,*
> *quem bis terque bonum cum risu miror; et idem*
> *indignor quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus;*
> *uerum operi longo fas est obrepere somnum.* 360
>
> Just as a library scribe, if he continuously makes the same error,
> although he has been warned, goes unforgiven; as a harpist 355
> is laughed at who always flubs on the same string,
> thus to me that man who often errs becomes Choerilus,
> whom, when he's good now and then, I wonder at with a laugh; and likewise
> I am upset whenever good Homer takes a nap;
> but it is alright for sleep to sneak up on a lengthy work. 360

The comparisons illustrated are not quite balanced: the positive *exemplum* of the individual who rarely errs is offered only in the context of poetry and only in the figure of Homer.[16] Negative *exempla*, on the other hand, are supplied in the person of the scribe, the harpist, and the poet Choerilus. The musician is first to receive the critique of laughter for his persistent errors when the passive verb (*ridetur* in v. 356) marks the subject *citharoedus* as the sole object of laughter.

15 Brink (1963) 187 acknowledges that "the adverb *male* may grammatically go either with *mandata* or *loqueris*," though he ultimately places it with the participle. I am inclined to take *male* with the verb, so Horace addresses the actor and then declares what his response will be.

16 Brink (1963) 364 remarks that Horace's comparison of other arts and poetry "prefers essentials to external neatness."

That the laughter functions as negative criticism is confirmed by the relative clause with *oberrat*.[17]

The second occasion of laughter in v. 358 is a less straightforward example of laughter as negative criticism. The writer who frequently makes mistakes is equated with the notorious, second-rate epic court-poet to Alexander the Great, Choerilus, whom Horace says he admires with a laugh (*cum risu miror* in v. 358) on the rare occasion that he gets something right. Homer, who is set against Choerilus to represent poetic composition that shows only the occasional flaw, is said to nod off (*dormitat* in v. 359) from time to time, a failing that incites Horace's indignation. After all, Horace is not claiming to approve of errors but only to tolerate them in moderation. In Homer's case, Horace quickly acknowledges that such flaws, which, in a continuation of his sleepy metaphor, he collapses into the noun *somnum*, are tolerable in a work of great length. As in v. 105 (*aut dormitabo aut ridebo*), Horace pairs sleep and laughter to communicate a dyad of negative criticism, but a small variation is introduced. Here in v. 359, sleep is a behavior attributed to the poet himself (Homer). The laughter in v. 358 remains the response of the critic (Horace). The metonymy involved in Homer's soporific characterization is easy to follow: when the poet sleeps, his poetry sleeps as well. The unstated assumption is that the audience/reader may doze off too, just as Horace had threatened in v. 105. A different variation takes place with the laughter with which Horace greets Choerilus' rare successes in v.358. The *risus* is not the pointed guffaw of negative criticism but is provoked by an encounter with Choerilus when he is *bonus*. Horace stops far short of offering unqualified admiration, because the critical context (*qui multum cessat* in v. 357) demands that the verb not signal respect. As a consequence, *miror* is best read to indicate surprise.[18] What of the laughter then,

17 Because this laughter occurs in the *ut* portion of the comparison, it is initially difficult to determine whether Horace is being merely descriptive or normative.

18 *OLD* s.v. *miror* 1a and 4. Brink (1963) 365 classifies Horace's response as "amused surprise." Horace uses the term in a similar way at *Ep*. 2.1.72.

and how does it qualify Horace's bewilderment?

The phrase *cum risu* seems to convey pleasure. Horace's laughter shows him to be enjoying himself, however unexpectedly, when he reads Choerilus at his infrequent best—an experience perhaps familiar to anyone who has happened on an unexpected literary nugget in a mountain of scrawled debris. A single "Hah!" may escape the lips, leaving the reader unsure of whether she deliberately said it or whether it was an unconscious reflex. This is the reaction that Horace compresses into three words: *cum risu miror*. And while the laughter conveys pleasure on Horace's part, this laughter is not positive literary criticism *per se*. The laugh that immediately precedes it in v. 356—the *ridetur* of negative criticism—is in response to a perpetually blundering musician. The inversion of this negative critique would be laughter that recognizes and praises a flawless poet. Choerilus is not this poet. Even though Horace suggests that a recognition of good prompts his laughter, it is understood that Horace *always* expects more of the bad from Choerilus. The disjoint between what Horace anticipates (i.e., *malum*) and what he seldom, and thus unexpectedly, reads (i.e., *bonum*) provokes his *risus* and his surprise—a crisp illustration of how perceived incongruity may provoke laughter. In other words, Horace's laughter is more precisely attributed to a sustained experience of reading than to a critical pleasure derived from the specific material read. His surprise-*cum*-laughter shows him to have been drawn out of an assessment of one good passage into a consideration of that passage's incongruity with the rest of the poet's work.

A distinction is implicitly drawn between what the reader experiences and what Horace, as poet-critic, believes is intended, an echo of Horace's remarks about the amphora-turned-mug in vv. 21-2. The "intentional fallacy" is not fallacious in the eyes of the poet who writes about poetry. Horace does not identify laughter as a deliberate aim of Choerilus when the bad poet occasionally offers up a respectable line of poetry. One may ask if Choerilus would have

welcomed Horace's surprised laughter. Presumably not. The question also bleeds into a consideration of genre. Though I discuss at length in Chapter 4, 5, and 6 the hypothesis that laughter functions as an indicator of positive critical reception in light of certain poetic conventions and within specific genres, it is uncontroversial to note here that the court poetry with which Horace associates Choerilus would not quantify its success in laughs.[19] Horace elsewhere makes an effort to emphasize the weightiness of such poetry.[20]

In *Epistle* 2.1, Horace offers an epistolary poem to Augustus about literary criticism, and he obliquely advises the emperor not to entrust the record of his *virtus* to an unworthy poet (*indigno . . . poetae* in v. 231). He illustrates the point with a reference to Choerilus, whose output Horace dismisses as "such a laughable poem"—*poema* / . . . *tam ridiculum*.[21] Choerilus' name and reputation are invoked to discourage Augustus from allowing any hack-poet to smear his "splendid deeds with a loathsome song."[22] There is no reason offered in Horace's portrayal of Choerilus to believe that the failed poet cultivated laughter as a response to his poetry. Yet both times Horace refers to "that Choerilus" (*Choerilus ille* in *A.P.* 356 and *ille* / *Choerilus* in *Ep*. 2.1.232-3)[23], he draws upon the vocabulary of laughter and the risible. Either Horace finds the poet's work altogether laughable (as at *Epistle* 2.1), or he laughs on the unexpected occasion that it is good (as at *A.P*. 356). In both cases, the poet-critic utilizes laughter for negative criticism. If the laughter does not pointedly recognize bad poetry, it appears in a sustained form of criticism where a laugh is not censorious in its specific application but in its broader contextualization.

In *Epistle* 2.2, another of Horace's poems that takes literary concerns as its focus, Horace

19 In *Ep*. 2.1.232-4, Horace states that Choerilus was a chosen poet of Alexander the Great.

20 In Horace's address to Julius Florus about the literary goings-on on Tiberius' campaign in *Ep*. 1.3, Horace indicates with his choice of verb (*sumere*) that to write of the accomplishments of Augustus (*res gestas Augusti scribere sumit* in v. 7) is no small task. The first word of the next verse is *bella*, gently invoking the idiom of *sumere bellum* (e.g., Liv. 8.4.3).

21 *Ep*. 2.1.237-8.

22 *Ep*. 2.1.236-7: *fere scriptores carmine foedo* / *splendida facta linunt*.

23 Rudd (1989) points out that "*ille* suggests notoriety" (208).

makes the point explicitly and concisely: *ridentur mala qui componunt carmina*—"Those who compose bad poems are laughed at" (v. 106). Horace marks the authors themselves as objects of derision, but the deficient quality of their poetry is the root issue. These incompetent versifiers are contrasted with those who are eager to create "proper (*legitimum*) poetry," whom he describes as making the effort to excise unworthy words from their poetry, to seek out the right terms, dusty though they may be, and to create new vocabulary when necessary (vv. 109-119). Attention to words and terms (*uerba* in v. 113 and *uocabula* in v. 116) is the mark of a good poet. The bad poet, self-deluding and uncritical, provokes laughter not only because he writes bad poetry but because he praises himself nonetheless.[24] Laughter is the critical response to both faults.

As the previous discussion demonstrates, the poet-critic in Horace's literary epistles (2.1, 2.2, and the *Ars Poetica*) draws repeatedly upon laughter to communicate negative literary criticism. Before I turn to my next topic of exploration—the use of laughter as a metacommunicative tool to direct reader response, I want to consider why Horace adopts this particular behavior to convey negative criticism (and by "consider why," I mean that I wish to pose more questions than I can possibly answer). Why is laughter offered as an appropriate response to bad poetic production? Is it significant that laughter is paired (twice) with sleep as a critical response? Two of the occasions of critical laughter Horace offers in the *Ars Poetica* are framed as first-person responses (*ridebo* in v. 105 and *cum risu miror* in v. 358). Are these self-characterizations by the poet-critic or do they indicate what would be a common response by a wider reading public? Does the use of laughter say something about the performative context of the works of poetry, e.g., that the poems are recited publicly or are of a particular genre? Is

24 The sequence of the verses emphasizes the obliviousness of "those who compose bad poems." Even after they are laughed at (*ridentur* in v. 106), they nevertheless rejoice (*gaudent*) in their delusions. It is as if they think their critics are laughing *with* them, and they are pleased by the laughter. Horace uses the verb *gaudere* in parallel with laughter in *Satires* 1.4.78, a passage discussed in Chapter 5.

laughter's use as a critical expression meant only to be descriptive or also normative?

Attempting to answer these questions requires one to draw upon the theories of laughter discussed in the introduction, namely the superiority, incongruity, and relief theories. In *Ep.* 2.2.106, Horace presents laughter which reflects the "sudden glory" of superiority that manifests itself whenever second-rate poetry is delivered.[25] Poets who write such poems are ridiculed for the explicit reason that their compositions are *mala*, much like musicians who consistently err in the same way are laughed at in *A.P.* 356. The incongruity theory is also at work in Horace's literary critiques, such as at *A.P.* 112-3 when poetry that is *absona*—literally "inconsonant"—is greeted with universal laughter. The boundaries between laughter in response to incongruity and laughter to express superiority undoubtedly blur in this particular passage because the poetry that is *absona* is implicitly inferior, but Horace nevertheless focuses his attention upon the incongruity of words with the fortunes of those who express them, and this is what he presents as the cause of laughter. Verses 112-3 also hint at possible answers to other questions posed in the previous paragraph. Horace's reference to "Roman knights and infantry" (*equites peditesque* in v. 113) offers a reply to the question of performative context; it locates the passage in the theater, a setting already hinted at in the references to tragic actors in vv. 96 and 104. Though Horace's prescriptions regarding good poetry apply to any poetic composition that draws upon character, be it theatrical (comic and tragic), epic, lyric, or otherwise, Horace paints a picture in vv. 112-3 of a public performance that elicits a public response. The passage likewise universalizes laughter as a critical response. Despite the fact that Horace threatens laughter in the first-person on other occasions in the *Ars Poetica* and may at those points be telling the Pisones and his wider readership about his own critical tendencies, he here presents a laugh responding to incongruous

25 A more extensive discussion of the superiority theory can be found in the Introduction, pp. 28-31. The phrase "sudden glory" is used by Hobbes in his iteration of this theory.

poetic composition as a behavior shared among Romans of all social standings. As for the final "canonical" theory of laughter, the relief theory may be operative when Horace claims to "wonder with a laugh" (*cum risu miror* in v. 358) at the rare "good" bits of Choerilus' poetry, though, as discussed in the introduction, the relief theory often works in concert with the incongruity theory. Horace laughs as an expression of psychological relief and tempered approval when he reads a good passage of Choerilus, but this relief is itself prompted by the expectation of more drivel from the court-poet. And while the laughter in v. 358 is descriptive, some of the laughter of superiority is also construed predictively. When Horace says that he *will* laugh in v. 105 (*ridebo*) or that the audience *will* laugh in v. 113 (*tollent . . . cachinnum*), the implication is that laughter, twice the apodosis of vivid conditionals, is the natural response. Consequently it can be promised as it is.

While answers to many of the questions posed above can be found in, or suggested by, the theories of laughter, either individually or in combination with one another, the remaining questions—"Why laughter?" and "Why laughter and sleep together?"—are more unwieldy, perhaps because of their generality. To make my question more specific, I might ask why laughter and sleepiness are construed as fitting responses to bad poetry rather than heckling or walking out of a performance, both of which are typical responses to "bad composition" nowadays. But because laughter and nodding off are also present-day indicators of negative critical reception, that query really invites a different question that is not about laughter at all: "Where are booing and walking out in Horace's critical quiver?" My juxtaposition of these critical behaviors that do not feature in Horace's poems with laughter and sleep does highlight a distinctive component of the two reactions that Horace does promise. Unlike the decision to leave a bad performance or to heckle a dreadful poet,[26] laughter and sleep are behaviors that can

26 For evidence of heckling, cf. *Satires* 1.10.76-77: *nam satis est equitem mihi plaudere, ut audax, / contemptis*

occur involuntarily or “naturally.” These behaviors occur universally. An audience member may not “decide” to laugh or fall asleep but may do both of these things nonetheless. For his part, Horace portrays laughter and sleep as reactions he can predict (e.g., *aut dormitabo aut ridebo A.P.* 105), but the fact that the behaviors in themselves are “natural” (i.e., physiological happenings) and could be involuntary (in a way that booing never could be) makes them potentially less offensive.[27]

To leave behind sleep and restrict the following speculations to laughter alone, I propose that Horace uses laughter to cultivate a more playful approach to his role as poet-critic. This does not mean that Horace does not take literary criticism seriously, nor is it to suggest that he does not value literature as an earnest pursuit in itself. As explored in Chapter 4, Horace in his guise as satirist recognizes laughter's practical value for approaching “serious” matters. Nevertheless, with Horace as my springboard, I hazard the following hypothesis on the function of laughter and literary criticism: Horace offers laughter as if a response to play. Thus Horace's use of laughter in his literary criticism designates the literature under discussion as a manifestation of “play.”[28] If a work of literature does not present itself as “playful" or "in jest," a reader's

---

aliis, explosa Arbuscula dixit.

27 Edmonson (1987) offers evidence to the contrary: “[Laughter's] phonetic features appear to be organized expressly to enable an individual to vote audibly and identifiably in a group context, and thus to make his feelings known in response to a certain range of situational cues. And each individual has the option of coding his presence and pleasure or displeasure, as well as participation or non-participation in a more or less complex proposition presented by the context. The sounds of laughter must thus encode a range of interpretable messages, feigned or sincere, revealing and sometimes involuntary. [. . .] The laughter utterance is thus a multiple-track statement, more akin to music than to speech” (28). Yet Edmonson's argument is from the perspective of anthropological linguistics and emphasizes the specificity of various laughs based upon the vowel that is vocalized (e.g., he-he vs. ha-ha vs. ho-ho). Some such variety is undoubtedly encoded in Latin vocabulary's ability to differentiate between a chuckle (*subrisus*) and a cackle (*cachinnus*), but this leaves a vast quantity of laughs to be illustrated by the unmarked *risus*. Stated differently, literary laughter conveyed by the vocabulary of laughter and the risible (as opposed to transcribed laughter) has “fewer tracks” than an oral utterance. When Edmonson concludes on the next page (29) that “[laughter] therefore stands opposed to the autism of weeping, surprise, expletive and command, and lies closer to the shared interjections of cheering and booing, of socially shared joy and anger,” his comments are best applied only to the oral (rather than literary) occurrence of laughter.

28 Richlin (1992) offers a summary of landmark anthropological scholarship on “play,” beginning with Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1955), in which the Dutch cultural-historian argues that play, rather than a means to an end, is an end in itself. Richlin notes that Huizinga's theory “ignores content” (74), and so she refines his argument by

classification of it as such would function as a default critique. The end-result is similar to someone saying, “Oh, I thought you were joking,” after she realizes that the statement of her interlocutor was not intended to provoke a chuckle . . . or an audience emerging from a theater having thought that the tragedy they just watched was a comedy. In other words, the complete misinterpretation of a literary effort brands that effort unsuccessful. To laugh in response to a poorly executed tragic characterization, as Horace threatens to do in *A.P.* 105, is to designate the characterization a jest. If the characterization is intended to provoke a laugh, then the jest, confirmed by a laugh, is successful. If not, Horace's “natural” response speaks for itself.

Laughter's “natural” and involuntary status establishes the origin of the laughter in the source text. The blame falls on the poet rather than the critic. If someone boos a poetic production, one can say that the “booer” *qua* critic has motives beyond critical appraisal. Why else engage in a conspicuous public display? The booer willingly (perhaps even eagerly) performs his disapproval. But a laugh that sneaks up on a reader (*A.P.* 358) or masters an entire audience (*A.P.* 113) could be a natural litmus, conveying more about the poem than about those who laugh. This may be a better way to interpret Horace's threat in *A.P*. 105 (*aut dormitabo aut ridebo*), which is to say not as a threat at all. The poet-critic tells the Pisones that his spontaneous reaction to poorly written or delivered lines will be either (*aut*) falling asleep or (*aut*) laughing. He does not specify the form his response will take because he does not “choose” it; an unscripted onset of drowsiness or a case of the chuckles, depending on the particular deficiencies of the poem, chooses him.

The fact that “bad” in the world of Horatian literary criticism may lead to laughter while

---

noting that “the genesis of individual forms of play cannot be considered arbitrary, and the content of each form must have some relation to its genesis, even if the repeated form seems purely joyful, without purpose.” Huizinga (1955) 119 also asserts that poetry came from, and remains, a form of play. For a summary of Huizinga's argument and an evaluation of his (contemporary) critics, see Anchor (1978). I postpone a fuller treatment of play theory (or "ludism") until Chapter 5.

“bad” elsewhere in the Roman world (e.g., treason) is met with more severe censure echoes some of the questions raised by Socrates' use of γελοῖον in Book 5 of the *Republic*.[29] The designation of particular things as bad and therefore laughable does not mean that laughter is the natural response to all things bad. It may seem banal to point out that there are different registers of badness, but this is to highlight a semantic ambiguity that is common to Greek, Latin, and English alike. In English, "bad" can mean poorly executed ("That's a bad song"), evil ("He's a bad man"), and, thanks in part to the popularity of a Michael Jackson song, bad can even be a variation on good (sometimes pronounced "baaad" to mark a contrast with the negative sense).[30] At *A.P* 104 and *Epistle* 2.2.106, Horace uses forms of *malus* to refer to laughable poetry, but this term too can mean bad in such varied senses as distressing, ugly, poor, and evil.[31] We can even return to the two variations of κακόν mentioned in the discussion of incongruity at the beginning of this chapter with the badness *qua* monstrousness of a Scylla and the badness *qua* inconsistency of a work of art. It is this latter type of "badness" to which Horace is attuned.

Because of his role as poet-critic, Horace focuses his critical laughter at a particular subset of bad art, namely at bad poetry, but in the opening of the *Ars Poetica* (vv. 1-22), he casts a wide net around bad paintings, bad poems, and bad pottery alike. The positive exhortation with which he counters these varied negative *exempla* is comparably broad: “In short, let it be anything you want . . ." (*denique sit quiduis* in v. 23), and the indefinite *quiduis* allows "it" really to be whatever. The reader and the Pisones can create what they please, but "create" is the operative word.[32] The “bad” to which Horace refers—the “bad” that can provoke laughter—is geared toward a creative aesthetic.

In the current discussion, I have treated only Horace's use of laughter for negative literary

29 See the discussion in the Introduction, pp. 18-20.
30 A single term with two antithetical definitions is known by some as an “antagonym.” Cool word, huh?
31 *OLD* s.v. *malus*.
32 LSJ s.v. ποιέω A 4 for the use of the verb to refer to the creation or composition of literature.

criticism and not any similar use by Vergil or Ovid—the other authors whose poems comprise my study. The primary reason for this is that neither Vergil nor Ovid offers such explicit modeling of literary criticism in his *corpora*. It is difficult to be more explicit about laughter's role in negative criticism than Horace's coupling of *ridentur* with the terms *mala carmina* in *Epistle* 2.2.106. Note, however, my repetition of "explicit" in the preceding sentences. There exist other uses of literary laughter and subtler forms of literary criticism in Horace, Vergil, and Ovid alike. All of these poets demonstrate through their works that, just as a "real laugh" can be provoked by any number of experiences, there are various stimuli that can lead to literary laughter. More specifically, there are ways to elicit a laugh from a literary audience other than writing bad poetry. For example, one could simply write the word "laughter" to set a laugh in motion.

CHAPTER 2: LAUGHING AT LAUGHTER

METACOMMUNICATIVE LAUGHTER IN ECLOGUE 3

SECTION I: METACOMMUNICATION DEFINED

In the previous chapter, I mention an example of contagious Horatian laughter (*Ars Poetica*, vv. 104-105):

> *ut ridentibus adrident, ita flentibus adflent* 101
> *humani uultus. si uis me flere, dolendum est*
> *primum ipsi tibi; tum tua me infortunia laedent,*
> *Telephe uel Peleu; male si mandata loqueris,*
> *aut dormitabo aut ridebo.* 105

> As human faces laugh with those laughing, so they cry with those crying. 101
> If you want me to cry, you yourself must be pained first;
> then your misfortunes will wound me, Telephus
> or Peleus; if you will have spoken scripted words poorly,
> I'll either nod off or laugh. 105

The syntactical parallelism Horace creates between descriptions of sympathetic laughing and crying (*ut ridentibus adrident, ita flentibus adflent*) invites these behaviors to the same playing-field, although the laughter, appearing as it does in the first clause, is given home-field advantage. The explanatory *ut* clause casts laughter's infectiousness as the stable part of the claim; that laughter can traverse "the fourth wall" of a theatrical stage is offered as a given. Laughter's contagious nature then operates as a potted argument for the contagiousness of crying, as Horace turns to tears in his discussion of tragic characterization (*si uis me flere* . . . in v. 101). When Horace says he will nod off or laugh in response to bad writing, he is citing examples of discrepant responses when corresponding ones are desired. If an actor has just mangled a monologue (or delivered a poorly written monologue), laughter will be manifest proof that tearful behavior onstage has failed to accomplish its purpose. Negatively critical laughter of this sort is now familiar from the previous chapter as Horace has offered one answer to the question

of why a reader might laugh at a text.

The laughter of vv. 101, on the other hand, is not qualitatively charged, positively or negatively. It is laughter provoked by laughter, an example of what I theorize is the ancient laugh track. The theory is simple to state but difficult to prove, my hypothesis being that an author will use the language of laughter and the risible to trigger a specific reaction in the reader. But how to confirm this? Unlike explanations of the modern laugh track, there are no treatments of such a use of literary laughter by ancient authors.[1] Horace's *ridentibus adrident* represents the argument literally as well as conceptually, but his words are about human faces, *humani uultus* (v. 102), and not words themselves. The spread of laughter from a literal representation of it (i.e., a term for laughter) to an actual laughing response might be observable in a modern readership given proper research. The existence of a similar response by an ancient audience would be a matter of speculation.

This speculation, while not empirically demonstrable among ancient readers, is by no means unfamiliar to a literate audience. Consider the last time you laughed in response to something you read. Perhaps what provoked your laughter was unintentionally risible, like the snippets of Choerilus' poetry that Horace acknowledges with the laughter of negative criticism in the *Ars Poetica*. On the other hand, maybe you read something that was meant to provoke your laughter, like a clever pun nestled in the headline of a newspaper article or a playful letter from a close friend. Your friend's note might begin, “I just laughed at . . .”, and as soon as you read those words, you prepare yourself to be amused—even to laugh. This is metacommunication, or

1 The topic has been of interest to social psychologists since the mid-1970s, though "canned laughter" was first used in a television show in 1950 (Sacks (n.d.)). For laugh tracks and social conformity, see Nosanchuk and Lightstone (1974). For laughter as a "situational cue," see Fuller and Sheehy-Skeffington (1974) 534. The authors also venture an application to television laugh tracks: "With regard to the implications of these results for the practice of dubbing laughter onto radio and television programmes, it appears that the practice has some validity" (534). See Lawson et al. (1998) for refinements regarding different evaluations of laughter that subjects believe to be canned rather than live and Platow et al. (2005) for experimentation suggesting that subjects smile and laugh more when the recorded laughter is believed to be “in group” (i.e., generated by peers).

"communication about communication."[2] The primary layer of communication is embedded in the literal meanings of the words that your friend uses.[3] This layer provides the basic information that your friend laughed. The secondary layer draws upon your (and your friend's) knowledge of stories that begin with laughter and are presented as "laugh-worthy." This layer informs you that your friend's story occupies a particular conceptual frame. Expectations are then set regarding how the content of the primary layer of communication should be interpreted.

The concept of the "play frame" has its roots in psychology and communication theory but has since been applied to humor theory.[4] A speaker can establish a play frame through explicit verbal communication (e.g., "Here's a good joke . . . ") or through various metacommunicative cues, such as tone of voice or body language (e.g., One friend gamboling toward another while smilingly saying, "I'm gonna get you!").[5] In the remainder of this chapter, I explore literary laughter's metacommunicative potential, namely, the idea that terms denoting laughter and the risible are often forms of communication that transcend their immediate verbal meaning to direct reader response. Laughter's paralinguistic status may contribute to its suitability as a metacommunicative tool, and so too may the social nature of laughter, but these

2 I note Richlin's use of this term on p. 65 n. 4.

3 Terms referring to "primary" orders (and, thus implicitly, "secondary") resemble Bakhtin's (1994) 82 use of such terminology in his differentiation of speech genres. Bakhtin presents "secondary" speech genres as conceptually akin to metacommunication: "Secondary (complex) speech genres—novels, dramas, all kinds of scientific research, major genres of commentary, and so forth—arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication (primarily written) that is artistic, scientific, sociopolitical, and so on. During the process of their formation, they absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres that have taken form in unmediated speech communion." Bakhtin's "unmediated speech communion" is, in a word, communication. Literature, even when it integrates this communication, is metacommunication.

4 Bateson (1956) and Fry (1963) both refer to "play frames" in their respective works. I use the phrase as I believe they do, without the significant weight of "play theory." Fry, whose area of interest is humor theory, acknowledges his debt to Bateson and restates many of Bateson's observations, but his own treatment of human metacommunicative cues makes explicit mention of laughter. The term "metacommunication" seems to have fallen out of vogue, though it has enjoyed a recent resurgence in internet articles about dog behavior.

5 Fry (1963) 126 says of these signals, "They are dependent, for their existence, for their content, for their structure, upon the situation they are both part of and signals about. They are one with the continuous ongoing behavior." A paradox arises from the fact that the cue that marks a situation, such as a claimed threat, as unreal (e.g., smiling or exaggerated movement) must be believed to be real or offered sincerely in order for the "correct" cue—i.e., the cue that says "this is unreal"—to be received. This resembles the paradox between "internal incongruity" and "external incongruity" discussed in Chapter 1, p. 70 n. 8.

are considerations for linguists and behavioral psychologists to examine. The hypothesis I explore is that a laugh in a text, while serving the primary function of communicating a laugh within the work, often serves the secondary purpose of alerting a reader to the suitability of laughter as a response to the text.

SECTION II: A CATULLAN DIVERSION

A detour from the Augustan poets to the poetry of Catullus is helpful insofar as Catullus offers ideal evidence of laughter "planted" in a Latin poetic text. The use of similar techniques by Horace, Vergil, and Ovid is easier to detect and to appreciate in light of the laughter that Catullus works into several poems. Catullus' c. 53 presents a self-contained demonstration of how laughter may function as a cue for a corresponding reader response:

> *risi nescio quem modo e corona,*
> *qui, cum mirifice Vatiniana*
> *meus crimina Calvus explicasset,*
> *admirans ait haec manusque tollens,*
> *'di magni, salaputium disertum!'*
>
> I just laughed at someone from the crowd
> who, when my Calvus had wonderfully
> set forth the crimes of Vatinius,
> raised his hands in admiration and said the following:
> "Great gods, what a literary widdle wit-ster."

This is the letter from your friend, the short note scribbled and sent immediately after a humorous experience. There is no stated addressee, and the speaker remains nameless. Familiarity between speaker and reader/addressee is assumed. Laughter bursts out with the speaker's first word, and a tone of the risible is instantly established. The laughter has already come and gone in the course of Catullus' first line, and the reader must immediately play catch-up on the narrative. The narrative is in fact told in reverse and condensed into a single sentence. First there is laughter, and its explanation follows. The occasion is a judicial speech by *meus*

Calvus, delivered so remarkably as to provoke an exclamation from a member of the audience. This exclamation, offered in verse 5, seems to have played a key role in provoking the speaker's laughter.

The speaker implicitly understands that a laugh occurs in a temporal sequence; it is provoked by something (e.g., an entertaining or uncomfortable story), and it may then provoke a similar response (e.g., another laugh) or a completely different one (e.g., anger or shame). The explanation of the laugh—its "narrative"—would seem limited in such a short poem. But imagine a readership that is familiar with an orator named Calvus who participated in a trial against Vatinius. Or perhaps there was a public figure who frequently used the rare word *salaputium*, thus opening himself up to mockery by mimicry. In fact, the speaker offers several possible "reasons" for the laughter as the poem unfolds. The speaker may laugh at the unidentified person in the crowd (*nescio quem* in v. 1), what the person said (v. 5), the mention of Calvus (v.2), or the recollection of the Vatinian crimes (v. 4). Suddenly the laugh's "story" has extended beyond the five lines of text and interwoven itself with public affairs.

The word *salaputium* is presumably integral in making the speaker laugh, but this ἅπαξ λεγόμενον is not without its challenges of interpretation.[6] My translation draws on the presence of *sal* (a familiar term of the risible in Catullus) as the first syllable of a compound, though I also include in my translation Seneca's reading of the word as alluding to Calvus' diminutive size.[7] Perhaps the speaker laughs because he recognizes that the anonymous exclamation was delivered in a tight, well-balanced line of metrical verse—a ready-made "line" in perfect hendecasyllables.

6 Weiss (1996) summarizes the textual history of this term and offers a very persuasive and confident reading of *salaputium* as meaning "salt-purification" or "refinement of wit" (358), finally concluding that the joke is an ethnic/dialect one (359). I make no attempt at conveying the ethnic joke in my translation. Hawkins (2012) adds that *salaputium* also functions as a programmatic term with neoteric resonances and elements of stylistic polemic (6-11).

7 See Seneca's aside on Calvus in *Controversiae* VII.4.7: *erat enim parvolus statura, propter quod etiam Catullus in hendecasyllabis vocat illum 'salaputium disertum.'*

For the sake of the present discussion, why the final line made the speaker laugh is less important than the fact that the exclamation could, and presumably did, excite laughter.

Like the amusing story in your friend's letter, Catullus' poem invites retelling. The speaker ambiguously positions himself somewhere "in the crowd." He is everyone and anyone who may have been present, and he simply acts as the mouthpiece for another man's witticism. In incorporating the exclamation into his own account, the unnamed speaker/poet invites a secondary speaker to repeat the entire poem—not merely the punch-line. The verses can be recited verbatim in the 1st-person (although a secondary-speaker is then obliged to align himself with the level of familiarity implied in *meus Calvus*). The identities of speaker and reader collapse into one another when the text is read or recited. As the reader declares, "I laughed" in speaking the first word, the text not only invites the reader to imagine himself or herself in the account but forces the reader to take ownership of it. A claim of laughter is on the lips of anyone who hears the poem and repeats it, casually or formally, to another addressee.

Does the poem actually make the reader laugh? In the case of a modern audience, the answer is probably, "No." Without a clearer understanding of the significance of *salaputium* or of the particulars of the *Vatiniana crimina*, an immediate understanding of the account is lost to us. But one can reasonably suppose that an ancient reader either laughed after hearing someone else recite the poem or laughed while (or after) he himself read or recited it. In either case, the versified account of a laugh would provoke an actual laugh, shifting from recitation or reading to realization. Laughter is implied before, acknowledged during (*risi* in v. 1), and invited after every reading of the poem. The laugh—its source, occurrence, and reception—is in a cyclical dialogue with the readership. Through the reader, the laughter becomes self-propagating.

In Catullus' c. 56, the poet plays with both the idea and the sound of laughter:

o rem ridiculam, Cato, et iocosam,

dignamque auribus et tuo cachinno!
ride quidquid amas, Cato, Catullum:
res est ridicula et nimis iocosa.
deprendi modo pupulum puellae
trusantem; hunc ego, si placet Dionae,
protelo rigida mea cecidi.

A laughable affair, Cato, and funny,
worthy of your ears and your cackle!
Laugh as you, Cato, love Catullus:
The affair is laughable and too funny.
I just caught a little boy bumping
my girl; him, I (if it pleases Dione)
with us all in a row, struck with my stiffy.

The vocabulary of the risible chiastically embraces the vocabulary of laughter in the first four verses: the adjectives *ridicula* and *iocosa* modify the "affair" in the first and fourth lines, while *cachinnus* and *rideo* (lines 2 and 3) demand explicit laughter. The final three verses (5-7) presumably describe the *res* to which "Catullus" refers.[8] The narrative structure is bipartite. The first part declares that something funny happened. The second part explains what that "something" was. The seven lines appear to constitute a simple "joke" poem, but in fact c. 56 uses the laughter for which it calls and the difficult-to-picture joke to engage the reader in a more elaborate dialogue with laughter. The poem endeavors (in more than one way) to create laughter.

The atmosphere of the poem is conversational and familiar as the speaker first exclaims about the humorous "affair" and then repeatedly addresses (in the vocative) and engages with (using 2nd-person verbs) a man named Cato. Who this Cato is, or whether he is a historical figure at all, is unknowable,[9] but the naming of an addressee effectively collapses the poem's individual reader into the name *Cato*. The third line (*quidquid amas* [. . .] *Catullum*) gently

8 Scott (1969), who establishes several interesting paths of inquiry raised by this poem (including the identity of Cato and a number of textual concerns), finds the situation described in vv. 5-7 patently unfunny (26). On the contrary, I believe that the frank glance into the speaker's bedroom could certainly offer a laugh-worthy vignette.

9 Though it is likely that a contemporary of Catullus would immediately know to which Cato this refers, the ambiguity may in fact be deliberate. Although a more logical correspondent/addressee may be Valerius Cato, a known member of Catullus' poetic coterie, the reading of *Cato* as referring to the moralist Marcus Porcius would also be humorous.

invites the reader into the speaker's group of friends by way of *Cato*; some love, if only a little, is assumed by the indefinite *quidquid*. The speaker also offers his name: *Catullus*, and the juxtaposition of the two names reinforces the affinity of the figures. *Cato* and *Catullus* approach the second half of the poem from a common perspective, and the reader is drawn in as well, wearing the name and identity of *Cato*. The shared orientation of the reader (via *Cato*) and *Catullus* toward the "affair" is an important consideration where laughter is concerned. The object of laughter has been identified, and all parties can laugh "in the same direction."

What "thing" is in that direction and even how many people are involved are points of some disagreement. The presentation of the "affair" is complicated by both textual difficulties and narrative ambiguities. Housman and Thomson identify the ἅπαξ λεγόμενον *trusantem* as masturbation and imagine the speaker catching the "little boy" *of* the girl (with *puellae* as a genitive) hard at work on himself.[10] Others believe that the scene describes an improvised threesome and interpret *trusantem* as a sexual act that the "little boy" is performing (or attempting to perform[11]) on the girl. Under this reading, *puellae* is a dative object.[12] The unique use of *protelo* in v. 7 and the textual variant *pro telo* ("instead of a spear") offer little aid in clarifying the action. The second interpretation seems more persuasive. The girl appears to be a familiar of the speaker—perhaps the same unnamed *puella* who appears elsewhere in the polymetrics.[13] The boy, on the other hand, is a *delicatus puer*, as Housman proposes. As for *protelo*, I agree with Uden's (2007) conclusion that "in a row" makes less sense where only two people are involved.

10 Housman (1931) 402: *Catullus amicae puerum delicatum, quem masturbantem deprehenderat, opportunitate data percidit.*

11 Claes (2002), 84 states that the "infantile boy is incapable of virile penetration," citing Giangrande (1970), 97 n. 40 who seems to treat *truso* and *trudo* synonymously. Giangrande cites *truditur* in Martial XI 46.3, where impotence and conative attempts at thrusting are stressed, though masturbation is implied.

12 Ellis (1889) and Tanner (1972). See also Uden (2007) 12, who summarizes and interprets the textual difficulties.

13 See *carmina* 2, 3, and 8.

I believe the poem is humorous, though any attempt to persuade a reader of this would most likely be in vain.[14] I will content myself with pointing out some ways in which the poem *could* be funny. The easiest explanation is that the sexual scene is itself humorous. The speaker invites *Cato* and the reader to take a glimpse behind (typically) closed doors where "Catullus" turns a sexual transgression *against* himself into a laugh-worthy image. After catching his girlfriend with a male who is emphatically portrayed as a nonthreatening little boy (*pupulum*), he promptly joins in the sexual act rather than otherwise punishing the boy or girl. Alternatively, perhaps the speaker is role-playing. The use of *protelo* may call to mind a livestock animal that the speaker "strikes" as if punishing it with a whip, thus casting the speaker in an agricultural role.[15] The speaker could even be assuming the role of a sacrificial priest, an interpretation that has the distinct appeal of accounting for the religiosity of *si placet Dionae* (v. 6).[16] The speaker desires to please Dione (or, more fittingly, her daughter Venus) by "sticking" a victim, and he invokes the goddess' name in a show of (mock?) piety.

The poem may also be funny in "metapoetic" ways. Consider, for example, the apparent lack of balance between the two parts. The first four lines are self-referential and internally balanced. Each verse is comfortably end-stopped with a strong sense-break coming at the end of the fourth verse. The second half of the poem, on the other hand, contains only three verses, the syntax of which is jumbled, as if mirroring the disorder or haphazard nature of the final sexual acrobatics. The fifth and sixth verses are enjambed, illustrating that the boy and girl are stuck together at that point. The conclusion of the poem after *cecidi* in line 7 leaves the reader feeling

14 I refer the reader to E.B. White's opening paragraph in the essay "Some Remarks on Humor" (173-181) in *The Second Tree from the Corner* (1954): "Analysts have had their go at humor, and I have read some of this interpretative literature, but without being greatly instructed. Humor can be dissected as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any but the pure scientific mind" (173).

15 For the use of *protelo* in an agricultural context, see Cato (*apud* Nonius 363, 10) where "three oxen in a row (*protelo*) lead one plow" (*protelo trini boves unum aratrum ducent*).

16 Commentators seem to be content to interpret this phrase as a stand-in for *si dis placet*. See Ellis (1889) 199-200 and Merrill (1893) 91.

as if the poem has ended one verse early—prematurely even Such an unexpected end could itself be humorous. An interpreter of the poem can even call upon unfulfilled expectations in the case of the reader who sees nothing humorous in the last three verses: the hasty, unfunny conclusion of the poem acquires an ironical humor after the effusive set-up in the first four verses.

Even for the reader who detects nothing humorous or laugh-worthy in the verses, c. 56 creates the laughter that it demands. As is often the case with Catullus, the poem should be read aloud to be adequately appreciated. The first line employs two distinct sonic effects with its repetition of r's and hard c's (along with t's and final m's, though these are less marked). The sonic effects are maintained throughout the subsequent three verses, primarily through the repetition of entire words and phrases. *Ridicula* and *iocosa* are repeated in different cases but maintain the same metrical *sedes*. The vocative *Cato* in verse 1 is displaced by *nimis* in line 4 but then inserted into verse 3 where it appears coupled with *Catullum*. The sonic repitition of r's and hard c's onomatopoeically mimic the laughter for which the speaker calls. The Latin *cachinnus* and Greek καχάζω are believed to be etymologically related onomatopoeic representations of laughter, a conclusion that is all the more reasonable if one accepts the possibility that the Greeks and Romans, like us, occasionally laughed with an aspirated "ha-ha" sound (i.e, χα χα).[17] Thus the repetition of c's throughout the passage, especially those in close proximity to one another (e.g., *Cato, et iocosam* in v. 1, *Cato, Catullum* in v. 3, and *cecidi* in v. 7) forces the oral reader to continue to perform this laughter.

How the repetition of r's enacts laughter requires a consideration of the use of laughter in Catullus' c. 42:

17 LSJ, *OLD*, and Chantraine relate καχάζω and *cachinno*. See also Halliwell (2008) 245. However, Kidd (2011) 451-3 urges caution in citing χα χα as Greek onomatopoeic laughter, referring to the cultural complexity of the *Greek Magical Papyri* in which the interjection is found. Fry (1963) 33 intriguingly refers to the "legend among professional funnymen" that the k-sound induces laughter. Unfortunately, like many legends, it is difficult to find corroborating evidence for Fry's statement.

quae sit, quaeritis? illa, quam videtis
turpe incedere, mimice ac moleste
ridentem catuli ore Gallicani.
circumsistite eam, et reflagitate,
'moecha putida, redde codicillos,
redde putida moecha, codicillos!'
non assis facis? o lutum, lupanar,
aut si perditius potes quid esse.
sed non est tamen hoc satis putandum.
quod si non aliud potest ruborem
ferreo canis exprimamus ore.

Who is she, you ask? That one whom you see
walking sloppily, and like some annoying comedienne,
laughing with the lip of a little French poodle.
Surround her, and demand them back,
"Foul tart, return our tablets,
return, foul tart, our tablets."
Do you not value this a bit? Mudpit! Whorehouse!
Or if you are able to be anything worse.
Nevertheless, this must not be thought sufficient.
As to which, if all else fails, let us wring
out the blush from the dog's brazen face.

In this poem, the speaker demands that his poetry aid him in effecting the return of certain writing tablets, and while making these demands, the speaker insults the woman who refuses to return his poetry.[18] He also establishes a correspondence between the woman's laugh and the mouth of a dog—a point reinforced by lupine and canine references in v. 13 (*lupanar*) and v. 17 (*canis*). As in c. 56, the consonance at work with the r's in *ridentem* and *ore* creates a sonic effect.[19] The comparison highlights a constellation of associations between the letter r, laughing, and dogs. The simplest connection is the alliterative one operative between r and words for laughing: the terms *risus* and *ridere* begin with r's, as does the adjective *ridiculus*.[20] The second side of the triangle, the association between the letter r and dogs, is explicitly observed in Persius

18 Fraenkel (1961) notes the resemblance these verses have to occasions of Plautine *flagitatio* (49-51).

19 In his own attention to the sonics of the poem, Frankel (1961) hears contempt in the repetition of m's in v. 8 (47). He notes the sonic effect of r's in vv. 16-17 but not in these verses.

20 I also have a pet-theory that the long-i in the first syllable of these terms and the fact that pronouncing the letter r requires one's mouth to be open force the mouth into an apparent open-mouth smile.

via the *canina littera* of *Satire* 1.109-10. One speaker in Persius' knotty dialogue says to the other, “Here the canine letter sounds from the nose.” Though it is unclear who is speaking and how the comment fits into the immediate context, the sound to which the speaker refers is certainly the rolling r of a growling dog.[21] The connection between r's and dogs appears even earlier in Lucilius fr. 3 wherein the satirist describes the letter r, “which an excited dog speaks more plainly than a man.”[22] That Persius is nodding to his satirical predecessor with his *canina littera* is confirmed when Persius calls upon Lucilius by name just four lines later in 114-5: “Lucilius tore the city, you, Lupus, you, Mucius—he broke his molar on those guys”—*secuit Lucilius urbem, / te Lupe, te Muci, et genuinum fregit in illis*. Is it coincidence that Persius' speaker depicts Lucilius as a man rending his opponents, fighting with every tooth in his mouth?[23]

Not only can laughing and dogs each be connected to the letter r, but, as Catullus' c. 42.9 suggests, laughing and dogs can also be associated with one another—the final correspondence in the triangle. In Plautus' *Captivi*, the parasite Ergasilus laments the state of the parasite's “profession” and comments on a tough reception he received on a visit to the forum:

> *nemo ridet; sciui extemplo rem de compecto geri;*
> *ne canem quidem irritatam uoluit quisquam imitarier,* 485
> *saltem, si non arriderent, dentes ut restringerent.*
>
> No one laughed; I knew right away that the matter had been set up by agreement;
> No one wanted to imitate an excited dog even, so as 485
> at least to show their teeth if they wouldn't laugh.

Perhaps this is a genuine lament about the plight of poor “street performers” or a metatheatrical

21 Kißel (1990) 255-6 collects scholiastic references to the verses (which mention the letter r) before summarizing difficulties of interpretation that arise from ambiguous changes in speaker.

22 Lucilius: *<r littera . . ..> inritata canes quam homo quam planius dicit*.

23 Anderson (1958) translates the phrase from Persius 1.109-10 *sonat hic de nare canina / littera* as, “Here [in satire] there is the nasal sound of the canine letter” (195) and believes that Persius is comparing himself to a growling dog. I wonder if this mention of the *canina littera* is instead meant to refer to laughter rather than aggressive snarling. The connections between laughter and satire are explored at greater length in Chapter 4.

reflection on the comic challenges encountered by the stock character of the parasite. Ergasilus reports that after he invited himself to a meal among some strangers in the forum, he was met with steely silence (*quasi muti silent* in 480). No one laughed, nor did anyone even fake a chuckle or feign a smile. The absent smile is imagined as comparable to an irritated dog baring its teeth.[24] As Ergasilus speaks, he gives voice to the canine; verses 485 and 486 contain several appearances of the *canina littera*: *irritatam, imitarier, arriderent,* and *restringerent*. It is not clear whether the passage is marking this dog-like smile/laugh as simply insincere or also derisive. Nevertheless, in these three verses, the acts of laughing/smiling form a triangle of associations with dogs and with the letter r. As Catullus demonstrates in c. 42 and c. 56, these associations continue to manifest themselves in verse after Plautus.

Thus the onomatopoeic effect of c. 56 draws upon the recurrence of both r's and c's. These letters mimic the laughter for which they stand. And so c. 53 and c.56 are poems in which Catullus deploys the vocabulary of laughter and the laughable to invite a specific interpretation and actually create the laughing response for which the poems call. In using the vocabulary of laughter and the risible, the poet invites—even forces—any reader who recites the poems aloud to satisfy his demands with, at best, a genuine laugh or, at the very least, with the laughter encoded in the sounds of the poems themselves.

SECTION III: LAUGHING WITH THE NYMPHS IN VERGIL'S 3RD ECLOGUE

Catullus deftly models two different uses of metacommunicative laughter, the first of which draws upon the use of words that signify laughter (e.g., *risi* and *cachinno* in c. 53 and c. 56), while the second relies on the sonic effects of particular consonants and syllables (e.g., r's

24 The charge of *irritatam* does not seem to be that "no one impersonated an *angry* dog" from an emotional perspective. It would be odd if Ergasilus were *complaining* that no one was upset by his parasitic endeavors. Even if the implication is that only angry dogs bare their teeth, the appearance and sounds produced by the dog (rather than its emotional state) are the most lucid points of the comparison.

and c's in c. 56). The sonic properties of verses were undoubtedly of interest to Horace, Ovid, and Vergil, but of the occasions of metacommunicative laughter I examine in the works of these poets, all but one draw upon complete words rather than sounds. In any case, both the transcribed words for laughter (*ridere*, *risus*, *cachinnare*, *cachinnus*, etc.) and the sounds of laughter that may be hidden in lines of poetry are fundamentally different from laughs "in the wild." A written laugh in Horace is still a manifestation of poetic diction—an occasion of careful and calculated word choice. This laugh does not bubble up spontaneously in the way that a vocalized laugh escapes one's lips.

Setting aside written communication, let us consider an exchange between two kids. One child attempts to provoke the second child's laughter. In response, the second child stares down the first and deadpans, "I'm laughing soooo hard." The comment hinges upon an obvious but important distinction that is not unique to poetry or literature but can be applied to communication more broadly: saying "I'm laughing" differs substantially from actually laughing. The first is verbal communication. The second is non-verbal (though still oral).[25] The difference exists just as certainly with words spoken or written in Latin and Greek. Stated simply, laughter itself can be deliberate or spontaneous, but written laughter is (almost always) premeditated.[26]

The effect of a written laugh is similar to that of written dialogue. Few people speak as fluidly as any of the interlocutors in Cicero's *De oratore* or any characters in Plautine comedy, but dialogue, when written well, simulates how we *think* we speak. Palmer (1954) makes the following observations about what distinguishes oral from written dialogue:

> Spoken language is distinguished primarily from writing by the greater intimacy of contact between speaker and hearer. The give-and-take of dialogue increases the emotional tension, which reveals itself in interjections, exclamations, forcefulness,

25 A strict division is difficult to maintain in works in which people speak while laughing. Lateiner (1995) includes smiles and laughter in the spectrum of nonverbal behavior which he examines in the *Odyssey*.

26 One modern exception may be instant-messages on a cellphone or computer. A competent typist can fire off "Hahahhahahaha" almost as quickly as the coordinate sounds are vocalized. (I typed that really quickly!)

> exaggeration, insistence, and constant interruption. The speed and spontaneity of conversation reduces the element of reflection. Sentences are not organized into self-consistent logical structures, but meaning is conveyed by fits and starts with parentheses, afterthoughts, and those changes of construction which grammarians catalogue as anacolutha, contamination, and the like. Perhaps most important is the fact that conversation takes place in an elaborate context of situation which often makes detailed and explicit linguistic reference unnecessary and tedious. Hence colloquial speech is characterized by its allusiveness, by deictic elements, abbreviation, ellipse, and aposiopesis.[27]

In "oral" and "written" laughter, the difference is more pronounced. The involuntary nature of (much) laughter means that a written laugh, when written into the wrong situation or even the right situation *at the wrong time*, risks seeming contrived. A typical laugh, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, responds to something preceding it and influences something subsequent. A written or narrated laugh is no different; the circumstances surrounding it typically exist in a causal chain. Hence the comparison with written dialogue. A written laugh, like a comment in a conversation, must be properly contextualized if it is to seem natural. It should occur spontaneously and realistically, though not so spontaneously as to appear random, nor so realistically as to rely upon "deictic elements, abbreviation, ellipse, and aposiopesis" for its understanding. In other words, a written laugh, like successful literary dialogue, will seem most real to a reader when it is actually artificial, when all of the information that would come from actually being present before, during, and after an outburst of laughter is distilled in the narrative.

With laughter as with speech, there exists a disjoint between how we believe we behave and how we actually behave. In *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation* (2000), the psychologist Robert Provine employed a form of guerrilla research to gather "real-life" laughter-related data. He and a team of his students sat in malls, classrooms, and other social spaces where they eavesdropped on conversations in order to record, among other things, 1) what preceded laughter in a given exchange and 2) who of the participants in a conversation laughed. To anyone

27 Palmer (1954) 74.

assuming that a joke or funny statement typically precipitates laughter, Provine's results are surprising. He observed that less than 20% of the laughter in his sample was in response to attempts at humor. There was indeed some laughter in response to "funny" stimuli, but this was rare when set against the laughter that followed commonplace conversational statements. Provine also noted that speakers laugh more frequently than their audience, an effect that was less pronounced with a male speaker and female audience. That any of Provine's results may be surprising reflects the difference between how we think we laugh and how we actually laugh. In narrated laughter, this difference is all the more exaggerated.

If a written laugh is to seem natural, the poet must take the emotional and psychological temperature of a given passage—Palmer's "context of situation"—and treat the laughter as part of a conversational exchange. He must plant what provokes the laughter so that the laughter appears to be the natural result of what comes before it and, depending on the centrality of the laugh to the episode, the natural cause of what comes after. A seemingly spontaneous laugh within a work is the product of careful premeditation on the part of the poet, far from the unscripted laugh we imagine to occur in social situations.

When a poet wants to elicit an actual laugh from the reading audience, how can that poet let the reader know that laughter is an appropriate response to the situation being presented? That the incongruity on display is laughable rather than laudable or lamentable? That the words being spoken by a character are a joke and not earnest speech? In other words, how is the frame of laugh-worthy "play" introduced? I put forth textual laughter as a potential answer to all of these questions. Much as Catullus invites and creates laughter by incorporating the vocabulary of laughter into c. 53 and c. 56, the Augustan poets Vergil, Horace, and Ovid alert readers to the tone of specific poetic passages and prepare a particular response by using the vocabulary of laughter and the risible. Unsurprisingly, a lengthy poem with few occurrences of the vocabulary

of laughter is more likely to contain verses that do not engage with laughter than a short poem with a single word denoting laughter, like Catullus' c. 53. Nevertheless, a single occurrence of laughter can carry great weight. In the following examination of *Eclogue* 3, one occasion of textual laughter occurs near the poem's beginning, but it sets the tone for much of what comes afterward.

Vergil's 3rd *Eclogue* presents the poetic ἀγών of Menalcas and Damoetas.[28] The two herdsmen trade verbal jabs in the poem's opening:

Menalcas
Dic mihi, Damoeta, cuium pecus? An Meliboei?
Damoetas
Non, verum Aegonos; nuper mihi tradidit Aegon.
Menalcas
Infelix o semper, oves, pecus! ipse Neaeram
dum fovet ac ne me sibi praeferat illa veretur,
hic alienus ovis custos bis mulget in hora, 5
et sucus pecori et lac subducitur agnis.
Damoetas
Parcius ista viris tamen obicienda memento.
novimus et qui te transversa tuentibus hircis
et quo—sed faciles Nymphae risere—sacello. 9

Menalcas
Tell me, Damoetas, whose herd? Is it Meliboeus'?
Damoetas
No, rather Aegon's; Aegon just handed it over to me.
Menalcas
Poor sheep! Always unfortunate flock! While the master
himself cherishes Neara and fears lest she prefer me to him,
here a strange guardian milks his sheep twice each hour, 5
and the vitality is stolen from the flock, the milk from the lambs.
Damoetas
Be careful yet: such slights should be offered more sparingly to men.
We know both who got you when the goats looked sidelong
and in what shrine, though the willing nymphs laughed. 9

The nature of the speakers' relationship in the opening exchange is complicated by the fact that

28 If one accepts Coleman's (1977) 14-21 chronology of the poems, *Ecl*. 3 was among the earliest of Vergil's poems and can be tentatively dated to 42-41 B.C. (18). Consequently, the laughter in 3.9 is the earliest appearance of the vocabulary of laughter and the risible in the works I examine.

this is the first time the reader of the *Eclogues* encounters Menalcas and Damoetas "in person." Each character's name is familiar from Corydon's lament of *Ecl*. 2, wherein Corydon refers to Menalcas as a previous lover (v. 15), and a dying Damoetas is remembered for having given Corydon a pipe (*Damoetas . . . dedit olim* / *et dixit moriens* in vv. 36-7), but despite the fact that Damoetas and Menalcas are known separately from *Ecl*. 2, nothing in the previous poems has prepared the reader to understand a relationship between them.[29] When Menalcas calls Damoetas by name in the first verse of *Ecl*. 3, he offers evidence that the two are familiar to one another. Perhaps very familiar. The imperative with which Menalcas addresses Damoetas (*Dic mihi* in v. 1) not only implies a relationship that could accommodate such a terse address but also suggests that Menalcas may be in the position of authority. On the other hand, the rusticity of *cuium* could undermine any implied dominance if understood as a mark of ignorance rather than a means of setting and characterization.[30]

Whether Menalcas is accusing Damoetas of theft or simply alleging that there is no way that Damoetas could possess his own sheep, Damoetas does little to clarify the power relationship in his brief reply of one verse. His repetition of Aegon's name in verse 2 parries any accusation or insult without addressing it as such: the sheep belong to another man and were entrusted to him. In response, Menalcas declares that Damoetas milks the ewes too often, a direct insult of Damoetas' treatment of the flock (vv. 3-6). Damoetas squares his shoulders to this jab and, in v. 7, reveals himself to be, for better or worse, Menalcas' peer if not his superior (*viris* in v. 7); he takes his turn using the imperative (*memento*) to warn Menalcas to watch his mouth, and

29 Damoetas' appearance as a living speaker in the second verse of *Ecl*. 3 is a jarring experience of the skewed internal chronology of the *Eclogues*, though one may also wonder if names and characters are supposed to be consistent across the poetic book. In any case, this is also a feature of Theocritus' bucolic corpus wherein Daphnis, whose death in *Id*. 1 is treated at length, appears as a speaking character in later idylls.

30 Henderson (1998) 224 considers the ambiguity of Menalcas' opening verse and asks (without answering), "Is the insinuation that Damoetas is known well enough to the speaker for him to be sure that the animal(s) cannot be 'his'?"

he fires off an insult of his own. He knows all about Menalcas' indiscretions, and the goats and laughing nymphs are witnesses too.

The laughter of the nymphs in v. 9 (*sed faciles Nymphae risere*) is the only occasion of the vocabulary of laughter and the risible in the poem, and it is designedly placed near the opening of the poem. When the nymphs laugh, they construct a frame of play around the Damoetas' comment and retroject this frame onto the beginning of the exchange. Hints of playfulness in the preceding verses (1-8) reveal themselves in hindsight, including Menalcas' pathetic address of the sheep in v. 3, his self-aggrandizement in v. 4, and Damoetas' depiction of the goats watching Menalcas in v. 8. The laughter communicates to the reader that Menalcas, at the time to which Damoetas refers, was doing something worthy of the nymphs' laughter. Damoetas (tastefully?) elides the verb, but the context invites the reader to imagine a sexual act —and a laughable one at that.[31]

Sexual insults are not without precedent in pastoral exchanges between shepherds; comparable examples appear in Theocritus' *Id*. 4 and *Id*. 5, both of which are models for *Ecl*. 3.[32] A versified slight in *Idyll* 5 is noteworthy for the similarities it bears to the passage under discussion in Vergil. The two competitors in the amoebean exchange of *Idyll* 5 are Lacon and Comatas. Comatas claims a didactic role in v. 37 (ἐγὼν ἐδίδασκον), in response to which Lacon asks when he (Lacon) has ever learned anything from Comatas. Comatas does not mince words in his reply.

Κομάτας
ἀνίκ' ἐπύγιζόν τυ, τὺ δ' ἄλγεες· αἱ δὲ χίμαιραι
αἴδε κατεβληχῶντο, καὶ ὁ τράγος αὐτὰς ἐτρύπη.

31 See Coleman (1977) 100-1 n. 7-8 and Clausen (1994) 95.

32 *Ecl*. 3 bears its strongest similarities to *Id*. 4 in the first 6 verses. However, when Damoetas gives as much as he takes beginning in v. 7, the eclogue becomes much more like *Id*. 5. For specific line by line comparisons of *Ecl*. 3 to *Idylls* 4 and 5, see, for example, Coleman (1977) *passim*, Segal (1967) 281-2, Clausen (1994) 86-92, and Hubbard (1995a) 60.

Comatas

When I screwed you, and it pained you; and these she-goats
bleated loudly, and the he-goat drilled them.

The speaker unflinchingly asserts that Lacon was not only educated in a sexually passive manner but that his education was a painful one.

In *Eclogue* 3, Menalcas is young enough to be under the watchful eye of his parents (vv. 32-4). Damoetas, apparently working for himself, may be slightly older, but a pedagogical/pederastic relationship is not manifest in their interactions (despite the fact that Damoetas may share such a relationship with Corydon in *Ecl*. 2).[33] Because Damoetas does not insert himself into his sexual indictment of Menalcas, the relationships between the two pairs of shepherds in the Vergilian and Theocritean poems do not parallel one another precisely.

The invocation of animal audiences to the sexual acts in *Ecl*. 3.8-9 and *Id*. 5.41-2 offers an alternative point of similarity. Damoetas' reference to the goats who tentatively (*transversa* in v. 8) watch Menalcas' sexual act echoes Comatas' reference to the goats whom he inspired, with the act he claims to have perpetrated against Lacon, to their own sexual act. In each case, the goats are called upon as witnesses who testify merely by their presence. They are accompanying "details" that corroborate the strength of the speaker's memory, as if the speaker were saying, "I remember because you were wearing a new tunic and carrying your gnarled staff." In a basic sense, the goats support the speaker's claims by contextualizing them.[34] But Damoetas and Comatas both go one step further by describing how the animals demonstrate an awareness of the human sexual happenings, whether through oblique disapproval, as in *Ecl*. 3, or direct imitation, as in *Id*. 5. The disapproval implicit in the goats' sidelong spectatorship in *Ecl*. 3,

33 Hubbard (1995a) 55 detects "the pederastic teacher-student interaction, familiar from Theocritus' *Idyll* 5" in the relationship of Damoetas and Corydon described in *Ecl*. 2. He nevertheless teases out the pederastic tension of Menalcas' and Damoetas' interactions as a representation of tensions in poetic tradition (60-67).

34 Of course, that the goats' reactions offer any "proof" of Damoetas' or Comatas' claims is funny in itself. In a situation where it is one shepherd's word against another's, the flocks would be surprising witnesses.

however, does lend a different sting to Damoetas' dig: Menalcas' behavior, whatever it was, made the goats blush.[35]

A difference between the two slights—Comatas' and Damoetas'— is that Comatas paints a picture that *could be* laughable (and presumably was),[36] while Damoetas eschews this ambiguity: the nymphs *did* laugh. The sexual act in *Eclogue* 3 is implied, but the laughter of the audience is stated as fact. In replying, Menalcas does not deny or even acknowledge the bulk of Damoetas' thinly veiled accusation. He adopts the nymphs as the implied subject of his own verb and asserts that they were actually laughing when they saw him laying waste to Micon's "grove" with his "wicked sickle."[37]

> *Tum, credo, cum me arbustum uidere Miconis*
> *atque mala uitis incidere falce nouellas.*
>
> I think it was at that time when they saw me cutting into
> Micon's grove and tender vines with a wicked sickle.

35 Coleman (1977) 111 n. 7-8: "This was too much even for the lusty goats, but not for the 'easygoing' nymphs, who might have been expected to frown on such a desecration of the shrine."

36 Comatas returns to the anal rape in v. 116-7 and uses an ambiguous word for grinning (σαίρω) to characterize Lacon's response:

> **Κομάτας**
> ἦ οὐ μέμνασ', ὅκ' ἐγώ τυ κατήλασα, καὶ τὺ σεσαρώς
> εὖ ποτεκιγκλίζευ καὶ τᾶς δρυὸς εἴχεο τήνας; (116-7)
> ---
> **Comatas**
> Or don't you remember when I pounded you, and you, grinning [σεσαρώς],
> wagged your tail well and grabbed onto some branches of an oak tree?

The violence operative in the verb κατήλασα and Lacon's role of passivity (as well as the framing of these lines within the exchange of invective taking place in *Idyll 5*) make it unlikely that Lacon would have actually taken any pleasure in such an encounter; at least part of the insult lies in the suggestion that he did. The placement of the adverb εὖ allows for a flexible reading of Lacon's participation in the encounter. Perhaps he moves his body in such a way as to indicate that he has previous experience in the position and is indulging in it. Or perhaps Comatas is saying that Lacon simply moved well *for him (*regardless of whether or not Lacon was willing). Dover (1989) 104 argues for Lacon's complacency in the act when he observes that "the insulting element here is that Lakon enjoyed playing the woman's role (holding onto a tree, like the young wife in Aristophanes) [. . .]." Comatas does not say that Lacon was resisting (by pushing away or fighting) but was rather gripping nearby branches. It is unlikely that σεσαρώς indicates a good-natured smile, whatever Lacon's disposition (as Comatas depicts him). At best, it is a deviant sexual grin. At worst, a pained grimace.

37 Cf. Cat. c. 56.7 (p. 91) for the use of a verb of cutting (*cecidi*) to indicate a sexual act. Adams (1982) accommodates *falx* and its diminutive *falcula* in *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* with a helpful explanation: "The curved shape of the sickle might seem to undermine a metaphorical application of the word, but it was no doubt the pointed nature of the object which was in the writer's mind" (24). Menalcas' joke may also play upon an upending of Priapus' usual responsibilities as protector of gardens. Priapus, in statue form, was used in gardens to ward off troublemakers with his own *falx*, for which cf. Verg. *G*. 4.110 and Tib. 1.1.18.

These verses have the makings of another sexual joke, although Menalcas is now careful to portray himself in the active role. The particulars are difficult to discern (i.e., What do the "grove and tender vines" of Micon represent?), but fittingly so, in light of the indirect nature of Damoetas' provoking accusation. Menalcas also anticipates the conventions of the subsequent poetic competition of *Eclogue* 3 (vv. 60-107), limiting his response to two verses and recasting content from Damoetas' insult as his own. His reuse of the nymphs laughter from Damoetas' comment demonstrates an agreement about tone—a willingness to play along with the idea that laughable things happened. He could have denied laughter altogether and taken (or feigned) offense, but he opts to play the game and enter with Damoetas into the frame that the elder herdsman has constructed (or proposed) with his sexual joke and the nymphs' laughter.

But how does Menalcas know that the laughter Damoetas mentions, couched as it is in an insult, is an invitation to play? The laughter in v. 9 is coupled with a clue to internal reception. The adjective *faciles*, grammatically modifying the nymphs, carries the sense of an adverb and renders the nymphs' laughter a display of "ease" or compliance. Were the nymphs not *faciles*, their laughter, occurring as it does in response to the sexual desecration of a shrine, would more likely read as disapproval or derision, like a cackle forecasting severe punishment. Instead, the nymphs, in laughing as Damoetas says they did, sanction Menalcas' behavior. It is as if Damoetas is saying that the nymphs *must* have smiled approvingly on the occasion of the liaison if, in the time since the sexual pollution, Menalcas has not met with more serious divine consequences. By mentioning the nymphs' laughing reception in the first place and then characterizing it as "lighthearted", Damoetas permits his own threat and insult to remain lighthearted—playful and suggestively reprehensible of his target without being crippling. In a nonmetrical poetic universe or a theatrical one with stage directions, he could have achieved a

similar effect by laughing as he spoke. Instead, he mitigates an accusation of desecration by calling up a laugh track provided by the nymphs. For his part, Menalcas allows the insult to roll of his back. The laughter of the nymphs reverberates in his verses, but as he asserts his own masculinity, Menalcas has the nymphs laugh in his favor. Through laughter, he accepts the invitation to playfulness that Damoetas extends.

Such playfulness forecasts the continued banter, insults, and even the riddling exchange at the conclusion of the poem. In vv. 9-11, both herdsmen have welcomed the nymphs' laughter into their verses and established certain conventions within the game The lively give-and-take progresses through mutual accusations of theft, pockets of poetic boasting and bashing, and a detailed discussion of the wager's terms, all before both poets summon Palaemon to settle the seemingly escalating interchange by playing judge. Immediately after Damoetas urges Palaemon that "the matter is not a small one" (*res est non parva* in v. 54), the judge-to-be reminds the herdsmen (and the reader) of their idyllic setting: "Speak on, seeing that we are sitting in the soft grass"--*Dicite, quandoquidem in molli consedimus herba* (v. 55). Whatever tension has arisen in the verses immediately before the competition begins, Palaemon dissolves it with his observation that the herdsmen are seated comfortably in the midst of a *locus amoenus*. Only after reminding the competitors that they are surrounded by flourishing beauty (vv. 56-59) does he lay out the rules for the competition.

Palaemon focuses on fear of love's sweetness and experience of its bitterness in the judgment he voices in the closing verses—*et vitula tu dignus et quisquis amores* / *aut metuet dulcis aut experietur amaros* (109-11), but the rapid fire amoebean contest between Damoetas and Menalcas is more sportive than lovesick, peppered with crisp sexual jests (vv. 76-7), poetic parroting (vv. 88-91), and thematic call-backs (e.g., the references to Apollo and Phyllis in vv.

104-7).[38] The riddles themselves are puzzling in more ways than the expected one: neither contestant attempts to answer the other's.[39] Even Palaemon as arbitrator, speaking immediately after both riddles are posed, refuses to take a stab at them, using the same words with which he refuses to pick a winner to the contest—"It's not my responsibility to settle such great disputes between you" (*non nostrum inter uos tantas componere lites* in v. 108). If Palaemon were only sidestepping the judgment of the contest itself, the singular *litem* might have been sufficient. *Lites* recalls the plurality of riddles that precede his calling of a draw.

Who answers a riddle with another riddle? What questions do not have answers? In "Virgil's Third Eclogue: How Do You Keep an Idiot in Suspense?" (1998), John Henderson considers the implications of the singers' final couplets:

> Since this is a one-off, for us, there is nothing to discount the notion that Damoetas actually had hopes that Menalcas had never come across that old favourite, the ploy of the baited riddle. It might be a poser for any second fiddle to decide if the response should be to attempt an answer. Presumably that is a mistake no one would ever make twice, for riddles are archetypal hermeneutic traps, which illustrate, *in nuce*, just the kind of aporetic play within language in use that the preliminary dialogue exposed to view: a riddle has an answer. A riddle does not have an answer—it has more than one answer. The answer is the answer I choose to tell you after you have taken your pick. Even if I do not cheat on you, and you will never know the answer to that question, still the answer to my riddle is, in any case, my answer to it, the one I choose to make mine. Like an oracle, the power-play of a riddle is therefore a mug's game. Except that it is possible to duplicate it, instead, as Menalcas does.[40]

As Henderson does too; his reference to "aporetic play" works in tandem with his titular riddle ("How do you keep an idiot in suspense?"), an answer to which he offers in the final line of his article: "*I'll tell (on) you later*—".[41] While Henderson explores aporetic play in the context of poetic intertextuality and interpretation, the aporetic play in the riddles of *Ecl*. 3 may also be seen

38 Coleman (1977) 127 n. 109-10 remarks on Palaemon's attention to the theme of bitter-sweet love to the exclusion of various other themes.

39 Wormell (1960) anticipates one of Henderson's conclusions, albeit in less riddling language, when he proposes that each riddle is constructed so as to have two possible answers: "This may be why no answer is attempted" (29).

40 Henderson (1998) 225.

41 Henderson (1998) 228. Italics *and* parenthesis are (unsurprisingly) the author's own.

to close the play frame when the amoebean exchange ends. If the nymphs' playful laughter that Damoetas mentions at v. 9 (and Menalcas implies in v. 10) operates as a metacommunicative signal that the poetic characters are engaging in a game or an extended joke, then the riddles are the punchlines.[42]

Whether or not the laughter within *Eclogue* 3 leads to a laughing response by the readership is impossible to say.[43] The laughter of v. 9 is instead a fork in the road of reader response, inviting the reader to travel in one of two directions: toward laughter or not toward laughter. To remain at the fork is to stop the journey altogether and to cease reading, but I believe that the reader who continues reading and contemplates the nymphs' laughter is invited to engage with the text in a distinct manner. Regardless of whether this reader laughs with the nymphs or does not laugh, whether she believes she understands why the nymphs laugh or professes total ignorance, she invests herself in the tone of the passage and, by extension, of the poem as a whole.[44] How the laughter and tone interact may remain up for grabs; laughter's inherent indeterminacies are still hard at work, both in the narrated laughter of the 3rd *Eclogue* and in any laughter excited outside of the text.

One may rightly point out that a reader can always assess tone in the manner I have just suggested. She can laugh at (or with) a text even when words for laughter do not appear in it. Even so, my analysis of the role of laughter in Vergil's *Eclogue* 3 asserts that the appearance of the vocabulary for laughter in this text communicates more information than the narrative claim that some nymphs laughed. The term *ridere* signposts a judgment from the reader that, absent the

42 Huizinga (1955) 105-118 offers a lengthy examination of riddles as a form of play and competition.

43 Holland (1975a) offers an early example of a subjectivist and psychoanalytical approach to reader response: "[A]ll of us, as we read, use the literary work to symbolize and finally to replicate ourselves. We work out through the text our own characteristic patterns of desire and adaptation. We interact with the work, making it part of our own psychic economy and making ourselves part of the literary work—as we interpret it. For, always, this principle prevails: identity re-creates itself" (816-817). Holland's *5 Readers Reading* (1975b) considers how "five readers came up with five dramatically different readings" of the same literaray description.

44 As with a modern laugh track, the decision not to laugh is a response in itself, though, as I argue, one that is harder to support.

term, she otherwise might not be aware she is making. In other words, if the conventions of reader-oriented literary criticism dictate that a reader is necessary to formulate the meaning of a text, the vocabulary of laughter invites the reader to become aware of her participation.

Laughter's early appearance in the 3rd *Eclogue* within a genre-conforming sexual joke, laughter's demonstrated "infectiousness" as it spreads from verse 9 to 10, the recurrence, after laughter's mention, of playful competition throughout the poem—all of these attributes of *Eclogue* 3 suggest that the nymphs' laughter is more than a parenthetical concession amidst shepherding banter. The laughter of verse 9 offers relevant information about its immediate context, namely, the spirit of Damoetas' insult, but it also colors the tone of what precedes and follows it in the poem. The laughter opens a mutually agreed-upon play frame that lightens the agonistic to-and-fro of the shepherds and proceeds to a mutually agreed-upon conclusion in the unanswered riddles of the poem's end. I above likened textual laughter to a fork in the road of reader response, and I suggested that laughter succeeds as a trigger to reader response regardless of whether the triggered response is sympathetic. Nevertheless, an abundance of signs in *Eclogue* 3 invite the reader to take the fork toward laughter, the first sign being laughter itself. This is laughter as a form of metacommunication: the laughing nymphs signal that laughter is a behavior in keeping with the context in which it appears and with the poem as a whole.

In its 110 verses, *Eclogue* 3 contains passages to which a laugh would seem an ill-fitting response. Playfulness, prevalent though it may be in the poem, is placed in tension with the "bitter loves" that Palaemon mentions in his final judgment (*amores* / . . . *amaros* in v. 110-1), and a casual survey of the names that appear in the contest proves that the herdsmen dwell upon their love-objects at length. Perhaps the point does not warrant mentioning, but a single occasion of the vocabulary of laughter and the risible does not render laughter a desirable response to every part of a poem. A laugh may be an altogether inappropriate response to some poetic

passages, like a giggle that escapes during serious conversation, and different laughs (e.g., joyous or scornful) may suit specific sections of a poem better than others. Careful consideration must be paid to where the laugh is "planted" in the text, because laughter that functions as a form of metacommunication in a poem will typically communicate information about the passage in which it appears, just as a good laugh track for a TV show will cue laughter when something laughable happens on screen. An occasion of textual laughter with no apparent tie to its context would be like a laugh track that is out of sync with its sit-com. But the textual laugh track may allow for greater flexibility in its application. A textual laugh can be read forward, as I have suggested with *Eclogue* 3, but it can also be read backward onto text that precedes it—or it can be read repeatedly, over and over again, until it acquires greater power through repetition. In the following explorations of Horace's use of *deridet* in *Epistle* 2.1.263 and Ovid's frequent use of laughter in passages of the *Ars Amatoria*, I consider how metacommunicative laughter can take any number of forms: sneers, cackles, and tears included.

CHAPTER 3: LAUGHTER THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

HORACE'S *EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS* AND OVID'S *ARS AMATORIA*

SECTION I: INVERTED DERISION IN HORACE'S *EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS*

In a passage treating laughter and negative literary criticism near the end of the *Epistle to Augustus* (*Epistle* 2.1), Horace reminds Augustus that Alexander the Great chose poorly in relying upon the laughable poetry of Choerilus to commemorate his deeds.[1] Shifting from this critique of the Macedonian ruler to contemporary concerns, Horace praises Augustus for his prudent favoring of the poets Vergil and Varius, but he promptly recuses himself from writing poetry that might be grouped with theirs. He explains why in vv. 260-263:

> *sedulitas autem stulte quem diligit urget,* 260
> *praecipue cum se numeris commendat et arte;*
> *discit enim citius meminitque libentius illud*
> *quod quis deridet quam quod probat et ueneratur*.
>
> Obsequiousness, moreover, foolishly burdens him whom it loves, 260
> especially when it recommends itself by metrical arts;
> he learns more swiftly, remembers more willingly, that
> which he laughs at than what he approves and honors.

Deridet in v. 263 marks Horace's final use of the vocabulary of laughter and the risible in the poem, the earlier uses occurring at v. 121 (*ridet*), v. 194 (*rideret*), and v. 238 (*ridiculum*). In this section, I briefly consider the differences in meaning between the verbs *deridere* and *ridere* and then examine the significance of this final use of the vocabulary of laughter as the only occasion of prefixed *ridere* in the poem. I conclude, by situating the laughter in its broader context (with an eye on the ongoing discussion of metacommunicative laughter), that *deridet* is part of a dramatic swing in the epistle's tone.

Cicero implies in *De optimo genere oratorum* 4.11 that orators who provoke laughter

1 *Ep*. 2.1.237-238. This passage is briefly discussed on p. 77.

(*derideantur*) in a courtroom case are failures. In the very next clause, he indicates that laughter described with the word *ridere* (*rideretur*) would be a mark of the successful attainment of Attic oratorical qualities.[2] For the orator who provokes a laughing response, Cicero distinguishes between negative laughter (critical or derisive) and positive laughter (approving or desired).

Cicero's designation of *deridere* as a term for derisive laughter overlaps with a disambiguation of *ridere* and *deridere* offered in Donatus' 4th c. CE scholia on Terence's *Adelphoe* v. 852. In glossing the word *derides*, the scholiast states that the difference between *ridere* and *deridere* is one not of behavior but of tone: *Et **ridet** qui simpliciter ridet, **deridet** qui cum alterius irrisione et contemptu ridet*. Both explanations include the verb for laughing, but adverbial phrases contribute the differences of meaning: *ridet* is to laugh "simply" or "candidly";[3] *deridet* is to laugh "with mockery or scorn for another." The scholia do not go so far as to echo Cicero's suggestion that *ridere* can indicate positive regard, but *deridere* remains unquestionably negative.[4]

---

2 *Opt. Gen*. 4.11: *qua re quoniam non nullorum sermo iam increbruit, partim se ipsos Attice dicere, partim neminem nostrum dicere, alteros neglegamus; satis enim eis res ipsa respondet, cum aut non adhibeantur ad causas aut adhibiti derideantur; nam si rideretur, esset id ipsum Atticorum*. The ellipsis (and logic) in the passage is challenging, but it is clear that Cicero, in placing the two words (*derideantur* and *rideretur*) in close proximity to one another, is drawing out differences in meaning. That a designation as an Atticist would be desirable is confirmed when he goes on to state, "It is typical of the Atticists [to speak] in a great and adorned and abundant, equally sound style"—*et ample et ornate et copiose cum eadem integritate Atticorum est* (*Opt. Gen*. 4.12).

3 The adverb *simpliciter* is neutral (*OLD* s.v. *simpliciter* 1, 3 and 5) and thus places emphasis on the behavior itself. It is as if the scholiast is saying, "*Ridet* simply means 'to laugh.'"

4 The Terentian passage appears near the end of the comedy when Demea informs his brother Micio that he will soon return to the countryside with his son and that he is willing, surprisingly, to take his son's girlfriend along. Micio approves, and Demea, as if frightened at having met with the approval of his permissive brother, lists the chores that the young woman will do.

> **{DEMEA}** *ego istuc uidero,*
> *atque ibi fauillae plena, fumi ac pollinis*
> *coquendo sit faxo et molendo; praeter haec*
> *meridie ipso faciam ut stipulam colligat:*
> *tam excoctam reddam atque atram quam carbost.* **{MICIO}** *placet:*
> *nunc mihi videre sapere. atque equidem filium* 850
> *tum, etiam si nolit, cogam ut cum illa una cubet.*
> {**DE.**} *derides? fortunatu's qui isto animo sies.*
> *ego sentio . . .***{MI.}** *ah pergisne?* **{DE.}** *iam iam desino.*
> ---
> **{DEMEA.}** I'll see to it,

Of course the use of *ridere* to indicate praise (Cicero) or even candor (Donatus) is by no means a universal one: *ridere* and *deridere* can express synonymously negative forms of laughter. As seen in Chapter 1 with Horace's use of laughter for negative literary criticism and in the introduction with Cicero's various uses of laughter in oratory, the unprefixed term *ridere*, like *deridere*, can—and frequently does—communicate a sense of disapproval, mockery, or general negative assessment.[5]

A Horatian reader need only look to the other occasions of laughter in the *Letter to Augustus* for additional negatively-charged uses of *ridere*. This laughter does not communicate negative literary criticism but a wider, "real world" application of contemptuousness and disregard. In vv. 194-98 of *Epistle* 2.1, Horace imagines that the philosopher Democritus, were he alive, would laugh at the inanities of present-day amphitheatrical spectacles and the spectators who devour them (*si foret in terris, rideret Democritus* in v. 194).[6] He would watch the deafening

---

there, that she be coated in ash, smoke, and powder
from cooking and grinding; besides these things,
I'll make her gather straw at noon.
I'll turn her as parched and black as charcoal **{MICIO.}** Very nice.
Now you're seeming sensible to me. And indeed then, 850
even if your son were unwilling, I would force him to bed down with her.
{DE.} You're mocking? How lucky to have such a spirit!
I feel—**{MI.}** Really? Still? **{DE.}** Alright, I'm done.

Micio's comment in vv. 850-1 offers more playfulness and good-natured teasing than mockery or scorn. The fun-loving uncle gets caught up in his brother's newfound cooperative attitude (however crotchety its manifestation), and jokes too liberally. The kernel of the joke is not immediately apparent. Micio's comment could be a dig at Demea's authoritarian attitude, as if to say, "And when you're done ordering her around, you'll even order your son to sleep with her." Or the joke could simply rely upon the childish, incongruous suggestion that Demea encourage his son to go to bed with his girlfriend when she is at her filthiest. In either case, Demea's query *derides?* indicates that he detects a taunt in Micio's comment. The extent of mockery expressed be *deridere* nevertheless remains unclear, but the term assuredly remains negative in charge. See Martin (1976) 219 for further discussion of this scene.

5 In the Aristotelian definition of the ridiculous that Cicero assigns to Caesar Strabo in *De or*. 236, laughing is clearly portrayed as negative critical behavior: according to Caesar, laughter is provoked "either alone or most especially" (*haec enim ridentur vel sola vel maxime*) by designation of the unseemly (*turpitudo*). See pp. 45-46 of the introduction for a discussion of this passage.

6 In his essay "On Democritus and Heraclitus," Montaigne states, "Democritus and Heraclitus were two philosophers, of whom the first, finding the human state vain and ridiculous, never appeared in public except with a mocking and ribald expression." After describing Heraclitus' propensity for weeping, Montaigne continues: "I prefer the first humour, not because it is pleasanter to laugh than to weep, but because it expresses more contempt and is more condemnatory of us than the other" (132-133).

crowd rather than the games themselves.[7] Horace also uses unprefixed *ridere* earlier in the *Epistle* at v. 121 during a characterization (or caricature) of the figure of the poet: "[H]e loves verse and he pursues this one thing; / losses, fleeing slaves, conflagrations—he laughs at it all"—*uersus amat, hoc studet unum; /detrimenta, fugas seruorum, incendia ridet* (120-121). In v. 120, the poet's positive, affirming feelings—love (*amat*) and zeal (*studet*)—are reserved for poetry alone. For all else, Horace paints the poet with a psychological outlook of laughing disregard. Insofar as the unprefixed laughs of *Ep*. 2.1.121 and of *Ep*. 2.1.194 communicate contempt, *ridere* in each passage functions as a synonym for *deridere*.

The reason I emphasize that unprefixed *ridere* communicates negative assessment, derision, or scorn in these passages lies in the poet's use of *deridere* in v. 263 after the unprefixed verb appears with a manifestly negative sense in its two previous occurrences in the poem. The semantic distinction drawn by Cicero and Donatus between the unprefixed and prefixed verbs—that *deridere* is negative and *ridere* is (or can be) positive—is inadequate, and Horace's own use of *ridere* in *Ep*. 2.1 demonstrates his willingness to present unprefixed laughter as derisory. Why does Horace shift to the term *deridet* at the end of the *Epistle*?[8] What in the meaning of the term or context of the passage demands the prefixed verb for laughter?[9]

7 Democritus' reputation as the laughing philosopher cannot be readily explained by extant fragments of his output: *FVS* 68 B107a, attributed to Democritus, reads, "It is proper that those who are men not laugh at the misfortunes of men but lament." (<ἄξιον ἀνθρώπους ὄντας ἐπ' ἀνθρώπων συμφοραῖς μὴ γελᾶν, ἀλλ' ὀλοφύρεσθαι>). See Müller (1994) for a thorough discussion of ancient evidence of Democritus as "the laughing philosopher" and his later overlap with Diogenes and Cynic philosophy. Halliwell (2008) 351-8 offers a cogent presentation of the (truly fragmentary) evidence of Democritus' biography and philosophy. By the 1st c. CE, the source or ultimate validity of such an enduring reputation was less important than the reputation itself. Roman authors like Seneca and Juvenal portray the philosopher as a figure who laughed at human foolishness. Seneca (*Dial*. 9.15.2) proposes that Democritus' laughter was inspired by the folly (*ineptia*) which the Greek philosopher perceived in human actions. Juvenal (10.28-53), in a passage that echoes Horace's description of Democritus, marvels that Democritus could shake with continuous laughter, *perpetuo risu* (10.33), without the ample fodder of Roman culture. Seneca and Juvenal, like Horace, leave no room for praise, let alone approval, in Democritus' laughter.

8 I find unpersuasive (and insulting of poets' abilities) those arguments for word-choice that stand solely upon metrical grounds.

9 In a note on Horace's use of *depugnare* in *Ep*. 2.1.184, Brink (1982) 219 states that Horace found *de* compounds "expressive." Unfortunately the commentator does not elaborate on what these compounds express, or else we would have at least one theory about why Horace uses *deridere* in v. 263 rather than *ridere*. Brink also observes

Horace uses *deridere* in the *Epistle to Augustus* to designate a difference of degree from *ridere* rather than one of kind. The *de* prefixed verb is not the negative counterpart to an otherwise positive *ridere*, but a definitively negative form of the ambiguous unprefixed verb. It is true that both appearances of *ridere* in *Epistle* 2.1 convey derisive laughter, but each appearance requires examination in order for a negative charge to be confirmed. A new appearance of the verb *ridere*, when bolstered by the appropriate context, has the potential to represent a positive response, like the laughter Cicero grants to a successful Attic orator in *Opt*. *Gen*. 11, or a negative response, like the laughter Horace assigns to the myopic poet and Democritus in *Epistle* 2.1. *Deridere* does not require the same interrogation of positive versus negative charge; the term plainly communicates negative laughter. Horace uses *deridere* in v. 263 to make an assertive declaration of derision with this particular laughter.

Yet in those writings that Horace presents as *sermones* (which include his epistles),[10] the reader does well not to trust the authorial voice blindly, especially when this voice confidently asserts a point. A reader may find that the passages in which the Horatian speaker makes a forceful argument precede moments of disruption, as if he were setting the table for a formal dinner, ladling food into the serving dishes, and then grabbing hold of the tablecloth and yanking before anyone takes a bite. Horace uses laughter—and specifically the charged sense of *deridet* in v. 263—to effect such a destabilization in the concluding verses of his *Epistle to Augustus*. The immediate context of the laughter illuminates Horace's mastery of creating ambiguity in the midst of overdetermination. With this in mind, let us turn to the relevant passage, paying particular attention to vv. 260-263:

---

that the *de* compound with *rideo* appears in Classical verse most frequently in the works of comic and satirical authors (260-1). *TLL* s.v. notes that *derideo* is absent from the works of Vergil and Ovid (among others).

10 See Whybrew (2006) who reads *Satires* 1, *Satires* 2, and *Epistles* 1 against one another with an eye on form and content before stating, "on the basis of this sequential reading of all three *libelli* it can be concluded that the poems of *Epist*. 1 do belong to the genre of *satura*" (217).

nec sermones ego mallem
repentis per humum quam res componere gestas
terrarumque situs et flumina dicere et arces
montibus impositas et barbara regna tuisque
auspiciis totum confecta duella per orbem,
claustraque custodem pacis cohibentia Ianum
et formidatam Parthis te principe Romam,
si, quantum cuperem, possem quoque; sed neque paruum
carmen maiestas recipit tua, nec meus audet
rem temptare pudor, quam uires ferre recusent.
Sedulitas autem stulte quem diligit urget,
praecipue cum se numeris commendat et arte;
discit enim citius meminitque libentius illud
quod quis deridet quam quod probat et ueneratur.
Nil moror officium quod me grauat, ac neque ficto
in peius uultu proponi cereus usquam
nec praue factis decorari uersibus opto,
ne rubeam pingui donatus munere et una
cum scriptore meo capsa porrectus operta
deferar in uicum uendentem tus et odores
et piper et quicquid chartis amicitur ineptis.

Nor would I prefer to compose chats
that creep along the ground to telling of accomplished
deeds and swaths of land and rivers and citadels placed
atop mountains and foreign kingdoms and wars ended
throughout the world under your auspices,
and the gates confining Janus, the guardian of peace,
and Rome, with you as chief, dreaded by the Parthians—
if only my abilities equaled my desires; but your grandeur
does not allow for a small poem, nor does my modesty dare
to attempt a matter which my strength refuses to bear out.
Obsequiousness, moreover, foolishly burdens him whom it loves,
especially when it recommends itself by metrical arts;
he learns more swiftly, remembers more willingly, that
which he laughs at than what he approves and honors.
I've no time for the responsibility which oppresses me! I
neither wish ever to be displayed in wax with face worse
for wear nor to be honored with lines made crookedly,
lest, gifted with such a dull present, I redden, and, together
with my writer, when I'm laid out in a covered case,
I be carried off onto that street which sells incense and perfume
and pepper and whatever is dressed in ill-fitting sheets.

Horace compares the chatty and humble genre in which he writes (*sermones* . . . / *repentis per humum* in v. 250-1 and *paruum* / *carmen* in v. 257-258) to the epic genre in which, if he were

able, he claims he would like to write (*ego mallem* / . . . *res componere gestas* in v. 250-251). The verses represent a straightforward *recusatio* until v. 260 where Horace's argument turns from his chosen genre and abilities to a general critique of a writer's assiduity (*sedulitas* in v. 260). Here Horace makes rhetorical gestures toward aphoristic concision, as if offering a tight *sententia*, but the subjects of the verbs and relative clauses change too rapidly for the sense to be quickly gathered. Even the particle *autem*, which offers itself as an explanatory anchor at the beginning of Horace's generalizing declaration, flirts with ambiguity enough to become a factor in the passage's interpretation.

Kilpatrick interprets *autem* (v. 260) as "the turnabout"[11] while Brink and Rudd read it as a "prosaic," or unemphatic conjunction.[12] The different approaches to this term demand different interpretations of Horace's subsequent argumentation. If, as Kilpatrick asserts, the *autem* is adversative, Horace retreats in v. 260 from the *recusatio* offered in vv. 250-259.[13] On the other hand, if *autem* joins the *recusatio* to what follows (as I translate it), Horace offers an additional reason for his refusal to write epic: his verse runs the risk of trivializing Augustus' accomplishments and being more memorable for its shamelessness than a reverent approach would be.[14] As Horace shifts to the impersonal third-person in vv. 260-263, it is no longer clear that he is speaking (or thinking) of himself and his own poetry. In vv. 258-259, he modifies *pudor* with *meus*, but personal pronouns and possessive adjectives disappear from the verses that follow; adverbs and third-person verbs take center-stage, while nouns and explicit subjects make themselves scarce.

11 Kilpatrick (1990) 10. His reading reflects a typical adversative use of *autem* (*OLD* s.v. 1-2 and especially 1d), but the use of the term at *Ep*. 2.1.199 (Horace's only other use in the poem) is amplificatory (*OLD* s.v. 4) rather than adversative.

12 Brink (1982) 159; Rudd (1997) 115 does not translate *autem*: "The centre of stupid and fawning attention finds it vexatious, / most of all when it seeks his favour through the art of poetry."

13 Kilpatrick reads the *Epistle to Augustus* as a lengthy letter of introduction that Horace writes on behalf of younger poets of his day.

14 Porphyrio: *Di[s]cit enim citius <et> maiore studio ridiculos uersus disci[t] et teneri, quam admirabiles. Ergo in aeternam memoriam foedatus est, quem tale carmen polluerit.*

The lack of precision in the language and meaning of vv. 260-263 is more noticeable when compared with the clarity of the verses that precede and follow the four lines. The *recusatio* beginning in v. 250 ticks off various "epic" boxes with its archaizing diction (*duella* in v. 254), interlocking word order (*claustraque custodem pacis cohibentia Ianum* in v. 255), and nearly-exclusive focus on martial matters, yet Horace's sense and syntax stay accessible throughout. Even when Horace makes explicit his refusal to tackle the topic of Augustan grandeur in vv. 257-259 (and illustrates the point with a stylistic shift from epic to colloquial language), his meaning remains lucid. Similarly in vv. 264-270, Horace uses familiar vocabulary and comprehensible syntax to explain why he has no interest in being commemorated in the work of an incompetent artist. Despite the readability of vv. 250-259 and vv. 264-270, the sections do not otherwise share a tone. The taut, epic style of the first passage transitions to a looser, conversational style in the closing passage. The intervening verses of 260-263 differ in style and substance from the passages that surround them, and it is no coincidence that *deridet* makes its appearance in the last of these verses (v. 263).

If only by nature of their location at the end of a *recusatio*, the verses in which *deridet* appears become a tonal pivot at the end of *Epistle* 2.1. A shift in tone is not altogether unexpected when an author has just finished explaining why his poetry takes one path instead of another, but the shift in vv. 260-263 is particularly dramatic. The four verses can be read in two couplets, the first of which comments upon the burdensome behavior of an obsequious poet, while the second offers an observation about readers' tendencies to more easily learn and recall things they deride than things they praise. Yet the first couplet's meaning and relationship to its context are at first difficult to establish due to a shift to a more sententious style. *Sedulitas* is the presumed subject of both verbs in v. 260, but one may initially wonder whether Horace is writing of a poet's (his own) *sedulitas* or that of patron seeking out a work. Suetonius asserts that

Augustus solicited poetry from Horace and thus prompted the poetic epistle under examination.[15]

My reading of the passage (as my translation confirms) is relatively straightforward: Horace, having proclaimed his inability to write poetry that the majesty of Augustus merits, assures the emperor that he is eager to please, but he also cryptically declares that this is not an asset when the poet's desire to please (*sedulitas*) stands to burden (*urget*) the object of his affection (*quem diligit*). The second couplet elaborates on how this burdening will manifest itself, and the clear and balanced syntax render the meaning of the couplet instantly comprehensible. The lines read smoothly from left to right and in sequence (with the possible exception of the postponed subject in *quis* of v. 263). The aphoristic effort, somewhat confusing in the previous couplet, is here successful. The sentence becomes a complete thought with the verb *deridet* when the relative clause provides a grammatical object for the verbs *discit* and *meminit*(*que*). The sentence could end here with the *comparandum* to *quod quis deridet* understood in ellipse, but Horace leaves no room for misunderstanding. He juxtaposes *deridet* with the verbs *probat* and *veneratur,* two verbs of approval, and he reinforces for the reader that *deridet* can only communicate disapproval and negative assessment. The prefixed verb for laughter which, as discussed above, already lacks the semantic ambiguity of its unprefixed root is defined by the conceptual antonyms with which it is compared. Such overdetermination in diction and argument, perhaps an asset in the composition of an aphorism, offers an ideal opportunity for Horace to take things in a new direction. The poet sets out just enough dishes for the reader to forget about the tablecloth immediately before he pulls it from the table, and the last dish he serves is a platter with *deridet* engraved in the middle of it.

15 Suet. *Poet*. 40. The historian quotes a letter of Augustus to Horace and then identifies Horace's response as the *Epistle to Augustus*. After consulting the scholia, commentaries, and colleagues, I offer my translation of the passage as evidence of my interpretation. Porphyrio offers a simile in explanation of v. 260 that is particularly colorful: *haec sententia generalis eos te<net>, qui prauo obsequio laedunt, quos amant, ut si te amet medicus inperitus, et nolit tibi alterius inponi medicamina, nisi sua. sed translatio ab his facta est, qui conplexu nimio quem amant praefocant, ut satius <si>t stulto minus diligi.*

With v. 264, Horace changes the tone and upends the order of the empire in the process. His first words *nil moror* are a standard colloquial expression of disregard in Plautine comedy and a fitting stylistic change of pace after the *recusatio* and weighty pronouncements of the preceding lines.[16] Between the semantic echo of *urget* (260) with *grauat* (264) and the syntactical similarities of *quod quis deridet* (263) and *quod me gravat* (264), Horace begins to trade places with Augustus. He imagines himself the object of incompetent *sedulitas*. The remainder of the poem offers a literary equivalent of that oft-unhelpful interaction in which one person says to another, "If I were you . . ." Of course Horace's hypothetical situation is absurd before he even delivers his advice: the advisor is a self-proclaimed lowbrow poet, while the advisee is governing an empire. As if substituting himself for the emperor were not ludicrous enough, Horace also conjures his own fawning, sedulous poet bent on writing lousy verse about him. He imagines himself transformed by and with his poet (*cum scriptore meo* in v. 268) into literary form, only to be bustled about at a local flea market among strong smells and other scraps of recyclable paper.[17]

The final verses of *Epistle* 2.1 may be laughable for their presentation of the absurd (as "poet" becomes "emperor") or laugh-worthy for their author's manipulation of tone (as the speaker rapidly shifts from sententious declarations to self-effacing fantasy).[18] I simply propose that, through a conspicuous use of the vocabulary for laughter (*deridet* in v. 263), Horace prepares his readers—the emperor included—to laugh in response to the poem's concluding verses. A strongly-charged word for laughter is planted in a stylistically self-conscious passage to

16 The phrase appears in (and throughout) 16 of Plautus' plays (*Asinaria* v. 643, *Aulularia* v. 169, *Bacchides* vv. 153, 989, 1073, and 1186, *Captivi* v. 16, *Casina* vv. 545 and 747, *Cistellaria* vv. 288, 371, 453, 482, 623, and 778, *Curculio* vv. 453 and 515, *Epidicus* vv. 350 and 687, *Miles Gloriosus* vv. 280, 447, and 759, *Mostellaria* vv. 746 and 845, *Persa* v. 767, *Poenulus* vv. 492, 1273, and 1415, *Rudens* vv. 583, 852, and 1248, *Stichus* vv. 206, 424, 429 and 714, *Trinummus* vv. 337, 511, and 1158, and *Truculentus* vv. 259 and 792).

17 See Feeney (2002) 185-7 for a broader treatment of these final verses.

18 See Kilpatrick (1990) 11: "Such a humorous conclusion to a serious poem recalls others in which Horace used humour to defuse a delicate situation and leave the poem's recipient with a smile."

communicate a primary sense that people more readily recall poetry which they deride. The sentiment itself is humorous, in part because it could very well be true.[19] But the textual laughter also metacommunicatively relays information about the atmosphere of the verse in which it appears, the verses that follow it, and even the verses that precede it. *Deridet* predicts and, at the same time, enacts a transformation of the poem's tone to a more playful one—and it does so not *despite* but *because* the word *deridere* conveys a more stable (negative) meaning than its unprefixed counterpart. As the potential for this negative, derisive tone is frustrated and inverted, the potential for play—even extending to language—emerges. This tone of playfulness maintains itself through what little of the poem remains.

Like the laughter of the nymphs in Vergil's *Eclogue* 3, the derisive laughter that eases poetic recall in *Epistle* 2.1.263 is more easily identified as a signal to laughter once the reader has experienced the material that follows it. Though the term may be subconsciously activated on first reading, it is particularly eye-catching in hindsight. And Horace does not allow his reader to progress very far before encouraging her to look back. The *Epistle to Augustus* ends so soon after the laughter is cued in v. 263 that the reader, after realizing that the tablecloth formerly on the table is now clenched in Horace's hands, may still recall that the *deridet*-inscribed platter was among the last dishes placed before everything ended up in the air.

Section IIA: Contagious Laughter in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*

Some laughs within a text do not seem to serve any more than a narrative function, but if an author intends a laugh to communicate reflexively and on multiple levels—that is, to function metacommunicatively—he does well to establish the laugh as unique. In the previous explorations of Vergil's 3rd Eclogue and Horace's *Epistle to Augustus*, the use of textual laughter

19 I am thinking of a poem that I saw posted to a door in Columbia University's Hamilton Hall several years ago—an advertisement for a campus "bad poetry" competition—that read, "Clytemnestra, you killed my dad— / Bad, bad, bad, bad, bad, bad, bad!"

as metacommunication relies upon the presence of a marked vocabulary for laughter in a marked location. The nymphs' laughter in *Eclogue* 3 is relayed in the only appearance of the vocabulary for laughter and the risible in the poem. Likewise, *deridet* in *Epistle* 2.1 catches the reader's eye when it appears after two occasions of unprefixed *ridere* in the midst of an aphoristic declaration near the end of the poem. In the third book of the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid utilizes the vocabulary of laughter in a concentrated swath from vv. 279-90 when the *praeceptor amoris* urges his female addressees to "learn" laughter and use it to their advantage. Because of the rapid-fire repetition of laugh-related words and the fact that the passage is about laughter itself, the reader is urged to laugh along.

The passage appears one-third of the way through the book in the course of a discussion in which the narrator offers advice to women on how to mask physical shortcomings.

si niger aut ingens aut non erit ordine natus
dens tibi, ridendo maxima damna feres.
quis credat? discunt etiam ridere puellae,
quaeritur aque illis hac quoque parte decor.
sint modici rictus paruaeque utrimque lacunae,
et summos dentes ima labella tegant.
nec sua perpetuo contendant ilia risu,
sed leue nescio quid femineumque sonent.
est, quae peruerso distorqueat ora cachinno;
risu concussa est altera, flere putes.
illa sonat raucum quiddam atque inamabile: ridet,
ut rudit a scabra turpis asella mola.

If your teeth are black or huge or not naturally
in line, you will suffer the greatest punishment for laughing.
Who would believe it, but girls even learn to laugh
and in this domain too they seek grace.
Let there be a moderately open mouth, small dimples on each side,
and let the bottoms of your lips cover the tops of your teeth.
One's sides should not strain with endless laughter,
but the sound should be kind of smooth and feminine.
This one distorts her features with perverse cackles:
another is so shaken by a laugh, you'd think she weeps.
That one sounds out something raucous and unattractive: she laughs
like an unseemly donkey hee-haws from a scabby millstone.

The physical defects that Ovid lists in the verses preceding this passage run the gamut from being small in stature to having ugly feet, a small chest, or bad breath. The last of these prepares the transition to a discussion of teeth. Most defects are acknowledged and "treated" within a couplet or two, but the curse of bad teeth is teased out into a broader point comprising 6 couplets. The reason is that teeth are on display when someone laughs, and laughter—proper laughter—is a learnable behavior (*discunt* in v. 281). Fortunately for readers of the *Ars Amatoria*, it is a behavior that the *praeceptor* is happy to teach.

In typical Ovidian fashion, the description is thorough. The *praeceptor* fixates first on the appearance of the face during laughter, with recommendations offered on the mouth, cheeks, and lips. He then offers prescriptions on duration and sound ("short and sweet") before presenting a handful of negative *exempla* to illustrate inappropriate laughter. Descriptions of twisted faces, excessive movement, and cacophonous sound culminate in the comparison of a laughing woman to a braying she-ass. The loose visual rhyme between *ridet* (v. 289) and *rudit* (v. 290) and the rhymed endings of the hemiepes in v. 290 (*scabra* and *mola*) grant the final couplet the ring of a punch-line, a sensation confirmed when the discussion shifts to a new topic (tears) in the following verses. The description of the donkey (*turpis*) and millstone draws up a visual portrait of the *asella* as she strains at her work. Through this elusive invitation to visualize the donkey, Ovid also invites his readers to draw connections to the beginning of the description: might there be large, scabrous teeth in the ugly ass's mouth?[20] The portrait of the ugly, abrasively braying she-ass distills all the previous visual and aural criticism into a unified unappealing image. A

20 Ovid makes an explicit link between *scaber* and the mouth when, in his description of *Fames* in Book 8 of the *Metamorphoses* (v. 802), he describes the monstrous woman's mouth as having "jaws scabby with rust" (*scabrae rubigine fauces*). In a vivid verse from *De Bello Civile*, Lucan refers to "swords scabrous with the bite of black rust" (*et scabros nigrae morsu rubiginis enses* in 1.243). The confluence of dental (*morsu*), visual (*nigrae*), and textural (*scabros*) references in Lucan's passage leads one to wonder if the adjective *scaber* carries stronger connections to the mouth and/or dark coloring. If so, Ovid's mention of the mill-stone at the end of the laughing passage invites a more direct recall of the black teeth with which the passage at v. 279 begins.

woman who laughs like a donkey, or looks like a donkey when she laughs, will indeed "suffer the greatest punishment for laughing" (v. 280).

The vocabulary for laughter appears in one other verse in *Ars Amatoria* 3 (in v. 513, treated below), but it appears six times in the twelve verses quoted above. Such a cursory quantitative argument already suggests that the passage is laugh-centric, but this is to ignore the carrot dangling before the ass. The passage is laugh-centric because it is about laughter. Only with tremendous difficulty and skill could someone write about laughter without using the vocabulary of laughter and the risible.[21] Ovid offers in these verses the lengthiest handling in extant Augustan poetry of laughter as a self-contained topic. With his attention to details including dimples (283),[22] lip/gum-coverage (284),[23] and proper and improper vocalization (286 and 289), he also gives a rich treatment of the combined visible and audible components of the behavior.

When Vergil describes laughing nymphs and Horace refers to derided, easily-memorized poetry, the two authors call upon terms for laughter that are otherwise scarce in their respective poems. Adopting the opposite tack, Ovid marks his use of the vocabulary for laughter as exceptional not for its diction but for its high frequency. The potential metacommunicative effect of an avalanche of laughter vocabulary is not difficult to recognize. For example, I could tell a story about a group of children laughing at a silly joke: “First Colleen laughed, and then Lyle cackled, and Charlotte had just begun to giggle when Keith let loose an ear-ringing guffaw.” By my third use of the vocabulary for laughter, I would not be surprised to see my listener smiling

21 One suspects Ovid would be up to the challenge, though in such a virtuosic display, poetry or word-play would eclipse laughter as the subject of the verse.

22 Gibson (2003) points out that, while there is no Latin word for dimples, “*lacuna* is used by technical writers of a range of natural bodily hollows”(211).

23 I interpret this line as advising against showing the gums or displaying a "gummy smile," where the *ima labella* are the "tips" of the lips, and the *summi dentes* refer to where the teeth meet the gums. It seems unlikely that the *praeceptor* would recommend hiding all of the teeth behind the lips (however appropriate if a *puella* were to have black teeth). It is simply too awkward to smile or laugh in this way.

and maybe even laughing. Ovid strives for a similar effect by having the *praeceptor* teach about laughter itself and use a swell of laughter-related vocabulary in the process.

The quantitative argument, however, could have the opposite effect and discourage laughter. A reader can imagine a context that lends my hypothetical cascade of laughs a darker tone—one that would not lead to a laughing response from a warm-hearted audience. What if the experience that precipitates Colleen's laughter is not a joke but an unexpected spurt of blood from the chest of Rupert, a former friend whom she and the other kids have violently stabbed to death? This is still a metacommunicative use of laughter that, if presented to an audience with a conventional idea of how children respond to aggression and death, relays an abundance of information beyond the narrated laughter of the kids. If such a narration were to appear early in a literary work, a reader would begin to make assumptions about character, genre, and, in the broadest sense, tone. Horror and dark comedy might come to mind.[24] A children's story would be off the table. In the foregoing, murderous example, the quantity of the vocabulary for laughter would not necessarily be as important to the passage's metacommunicative effect as the behavior's apparent incongruity to the situation. The description of a single child who enthusiastically laughs after committing a murder would go a long way in establishing tone and in communicating information beyond the primary layer of narrative. The addition of the accomplices' laughter would intensify an atmosphere that was already realized. Instead of being about an individual crazy kid, the narrative would be about a gang of potentially unstable youths.

The preceding comments about textual laughter's ability to discourage a like response is intended to illustrate that laughter as metacommunication need not always lead to a congruent reader response of laughter. Whether utilized to encourage or repulse a laughing response,

24 I mention dark comedy to acknowledge that the apparent incongruity of children behaving like murderous, pathological adults could still lead to a laughing response from an audience. In such a case, how the laughter relates to other potentially metacommunicative genre- or character-specific cues would be relevant to reader response.

laughter's metacommunicative potential resides in the contagious and involuntary nature, real or perceived, of the behavior. Either people laugh at laughter, or, when they do not, they detect something wrong with the laughter. Though one might detect misogynistic elements in Ovid's concentrated use of the vocabulary of laughter from vv. 279-90, the poet is not describing a horrifying situation.[25] The *praeceptor amoris* aims to inculcate graceful laughter (*decor* in v. 282) in his addressees, and however unfavorable some of the laughter he describes, he creates a laugh track that consists of laughter terminology and encourages a similar laughing response in the poem's readers. To ascribe this "encouragement" to laugh to the quantity of laughter-related vocabulary alone is to fail to recognize Ovid's command of irony. While inundating the reader with terms for laughter, Ovid has the *praeceptor* self-consciously disrupt the notion that laughter is a reflexive behavior.

Ovid draws upon the implied learnability of laughter to open a play frame in v. 281, though, with an author as relentlessly playful as Ovid, one might suggest that the poet does not begin and end discrete playful passages but simply moves between them. The entirety of the *Ars Amatoria* is in some sense an extended joke that turns upon the proposed learnability of another conventionally unlearned behavior, namely, the experience of love.[26] When, in the second couplet of the first book (*Ars*. 1.3-4), the *praeceptor* compares the *ars* involved in *amor* to the skills

25 In notes on his translation, Green (1982) remarks of the vv. 250-80, "[T]he clientele of a marriage bureau or lonelyhearts column is not drawn, by and large, from the well-heeled, the well-favoured or the well-adjusted. At the same time Ovid clearly used this as an excuse to exercise a carefully controlled vein of genial contempt for the whole female sex. The short, pallid, scrawny, flat-chested composite figure, with buck teeth and bad breath, that emerges from these lines is both plausible and drawn with a kind of lingering and venomous passion" (389).

26 Volk (2006) sidesteps the absurdity (though, with it, the joke) on “learned love” when she observes, “The *Ars Amatoria* is thus really something like the art of dating, the art of the love affair, and *not* the art of love. This, of course, is the reason why it is teachable in the first place: *amor* is for Ovid not a feeling but a mode of behaviour, and thus can be mastered by following the simple steps laid out in his didactic poem” (242). However, Volk (2002), in an earlier and more comprehensive treatment of the sense of *amor* in the *Ars*, acknowledges that the work exhibits a “play” between *amor* as courtship and *amor* as emotion (158-9, 169-70). For a concise consideration of earlier erotodidactic texts, see Gibson (2003) 13-19 who seems willing to collapse instruction on seduction, retention, and even sexual positions into a single tradition with the disclaimer that “this tradition could not be called a 'genre' in the usual sense, as few works of literary quality seem to have been cast wholly in this form either before or after the *Ars Amatoria*” (14).

required to pilot a ship or maneuver a chariot, his emphasis on established technical *artes* renders the *praeceptor's* stated ambition absurd in contrast. The first-time reader may wonder if the *praeceptor* knows that love is an emotion and not a conventional means of transport. But the *praeceptor* persists in the comparison and even restates it in his claim, "I will be called the Tiphys or Automedon of Love." In the subsequent verses Ovid places the anthropomorphized, boyish Amor (*puer* in *Ars*. 1.10), fierce and presumably armed (*arcu* in 1.21), in the chariot with the *praeceptor*.[27] When in *Ars*. 3.281 the *praeceptor* asks *quis credat?* in anticipation of his claim that laughter can be taught (and thus learned), Ovid tees up a joke at the expense of an implicitly gullible readership. He also lends his *praeceptor* the air of a huckster. Who would believe it? The remainder of the line (*discunt etiam ridere puellae*) is indeed unbelievable until softened by the following verse's clarification that it is *decor* in laughing that the *praeceptor* will teach rather than the ability to laugh. Even to claim this power—the power to teach how to laugh with grace—is to imply that a student can learn to exercise a questionable degree of control over a behavior that is frequently treated as if it were reflexive. The *praeceptor* stops short of claiming that laughter itself is taught or learned, but he flirts with the joke by delaying any mention of *decor* until the very end of v. 282.

In small-scale ring composition, Ovid concludes his treatment of laughter by announcing the learnability of another behavior typically considered involuntary or reflexive: "To where does art not extend? Women learn to cry gracefully / and they weep at the time and in the manner they wish" (*quo non ars penetrat? discunt lacrimare decenter / quoque volunt plorant tempore quoque modo* in vv. 291-2). The parallels to v. 281 in syntax and vocabulary are many, from the verse-opening rhetorical question to the reuse of *discunt* in the middle of the line with a

27 *Ars* 1.8: *Tiphys et Automedon dicar Amoris ego*. Volk (2002) 180-1 draws attention to the "leitmotifs" of seafaring and chariot-riding in the *Ars*.

complementary infinitive. Unlike vv. 281-2, however, Ovid does not make the reader wait long in order to learn that grace is the goal in crying; the adverb *decenter*, appearing at line's end, renders the sentiment less jarring. Nevertheless, Ovid's remarks on laughter have more in common with the verses that precede them than with the verses on crying; the advice of the *praeceptor* regarding laughter begins with, and ultimately returns to, a discussion of physical shortcomings (bad teeth and abrasive cackles) and how to mask them. Crying is not portrayed as a physical fault, like skinniness and halitosis, nor is it coupled with negative *exempla*, like the portrait of the woman with an asinine cackle.

Ovid does not delineate sharp divisions between each section of the *Ars Amatoria* but allows the casual persona of the *praeceptor amoris* to stitch together seemingly unrelated topics and to maneuver gradually through subtle transitions. For example, the considerably brief discussion of crying in vv. 291-2 completes a transition of topic first initiated in the *praeceptor's* treatment of laughter when he toys with the idea that anything can be learned. However, despite his claim that women can learn to cry on demand, the *praeceptor* offers no advice on how to do this. Though willing to offer specific and ostensibly practicable advice on laughter, the *praeceptor* volunteers little more than a vague anecdotal claim when it comes to crying.[28] The prescriptive approach to laughter sets this advice off from what follows; both the subject matter and the pedagogical approaches differ.

Like the laughs in Vergil's *Eclogue* 3 and in Horace's *Epistle to Augustus*, the laughter mentioned throughout vv. 279-90 encourages a like response. Ovid's use of laughter as metacommunication draws upon the high frequency of the vocabulary for laughter in the passage and the provocative treatment of the behavior itself. The two metacommunicative uses work in

28 In his commentary on vv. 281-2, Gibson (2003) notes that the *praeceptor* uses "descriptive rather than prescriptive forms in other controversial subject areas" (211).

concert: first, repeated words for laughter are set out as kindling; then Ovid lights the spark for a laughing response by subverting, if only momentarily, the conception of laughter's unlearned and involuntary status (v. 281). He stokes the flame one last time with the climactic she-ass simile in v. 290, and makes clear that laughter, whether sympathetic (with the *praeceptor*) or ironic (with Ovid), is an appropriate response to the passage. The potential for irony lies in the self-referentiality of the topic. In the midst of undermining the ancient laugh track by portraying the unnatural as natural and the involuntary as voluntary, Ovid ultimately invites the natural response by triggering the laugh track.

Section IIB: Laughing Through Ovid's Tears

After his mention of women who can cry on demand, the *praeceptor* proceeds to suggest that *ars* can also be applied to speaking (ideally with a lisp, vv. 293-6) and to walking (vv. 297-310). The *praeceptor*'s assertions regarding the learnable nature of graceful laughing, crying, speaking, and walking would not seem out of place if they were construed as a theatrical coach's advice to an actress. To produce a typically involuntary behavior on command and to control and refine abilities like speaking and walking fall within the domain of theatrical *ars*, and, indeed, the *praeceptor amoris* proceeds to treat performance arts in vv. 311-352 when he recommends that women learn songs, memorize poetry, and train in dance. An eager student, in her rush to find out what poetry she should learn (the *praeceptor qua* Ovid hopes the assigned readings include many of his own works in vv. 339-348), might not even realize that the instructor came up short on the topic of crying. The *ars* of tears is one skill that women do not learn from him, a surprising fact in light of the representation of crying and tears as less of a liability than obnoxious laughter and physical faults.[29] On the contrary, tears are presented as potential assets.

29 Gibson (2003) suggests that Ovid does not offer advice "in the context of unease about recommending things which deceived men" (215). See also the previous note.

In vv. 431-2, the *praeceptor* acknowledges the appeal of disheveled hair and unrestrained tears (*ire solutis / crinibus et fletus non tenuisse decet*); a widow might use both to attract a new husband at her former husband's funeral. Likewise in v. 677, the instructor recommends that women summon tears (*accedant lacrimae*) in order to keep their male partners emotionally attuned: "Bring it about that we believe we are loved" (*efficite . . . ut nos credamus amari* in vv. 673-4). Though the *praeceptor* neglects to offer detailed instruction on how to cry, he does imply that graceful crying, like graceful laughing, is a skill to cultivate.

The behaviors of laughing and crying frequently appear in tandem in the *Ars Amatoria*. In the *praeceptor's* progression of instructions in *Ars*. 3.279-92, his comments on tears seem to flow naturally from the discussion of laughter. Even within the verses devoted to laughter, the behaviors of laughing and crying are presented as potentially indistinguishable under some circumstances: "[A]nother is so shaken by a laugh, you'd think she weeps" (*risu concussa est altera, flere putes* in v. 288). Similarities between laughing and crying are apparent when these behaviors are compared to the other two behaviors which the *praeceptor* claims an ability to teach, namely, affectations of speech and gait. For example, speaking and walking, given the physical capacity to do both (and no underlying pathology, e.g., Tourette's syndrome), are voluntary, while laughter and tears are often elicited involuntarily. Laughing and crying are commonly interpreted as physical responses to emotional stimuli or expressions of "feelings", but speaking and lisping are rarely assigned emotional resonance in and of themselves. Finally, laughing and crying are both considered contagious under certain circumstances. A person who witnesses another person's laughter or tears will sometimes offer a sympathetic or congruent behavioral response, either involuntarily or as a conscious show of solidarity. Though a person may walk to keep up with another or mimic some of the speech patterns of an interlocutor, walking and lisping are rarely contagious in any conventional interpretation of the word.

The pairing of laughing and crying is hardly unique to Ovid. As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, Horace initially presents the two as parallel contagious behaviors in *A.P.* 101 and then as somewhat antithetical responses to literature in *A.P.* 102-5. The similar-yet-opposite behaviors appear together throughout ancient literature, and a thorough treatment of their pairing falls outside the scope of my inquiry.[30] Nevertheless, the Augustan poets, and Ovid in particular, repeatedly mention laughter and tears in close proximity to one another. In this final section I propose that one effect of Ovid's frequent coupling of crying with laughing is that the two distinct behaviors begin to share a metacommunicative charge.

If the ancient laugh track, as I have described it, is a product of the metacommunicative use of laughter, could there be such a thing as a "cry track"? Before I push this line of inquiry further, I readily admit my belief that a textual cry track, should it exist, would not be as effective a form of metacommunication as a laugh track.[31] Perhaps this suspicion derives from a different conception of the sociality of crying versus laughing, but tears within a text, though they may contribute to tone and indicate that crying would be an appropriate response to the passage in which the tears appear, would, to my mind, be less likely to lead to a congruent reader response (i.e., actual crying) than a depiction of laughter. But regardless of whether terms for crying can ever be shown to be as metacommunicatively active or potent as terms for laughing, the argument I wish to put forth is still prompted by the question of why a reader would laugh in response to a text. I propose that Ovid, on at least one occasion, uses the vocabulary of both laughing and crying to stimulate a *laughing* response. He observes the conventional use of the two as opposite sides of the same coin, but, by routinely referring to the concepts together and

30 Arnould (1990) is an early and frequently cited example of scholarship that tackles laughing and crying in a single work, though she too tends to separate the two behaviors.

31 Despite the prevalence of laugh tracks in certain modern television productions (primarily sit-coms), I have never had what I would imagine would be the thoroughly uncomfortable experience of watching a sad scene to the accompaniment of unseen sobbing.

condensing their respective vocabularies—by flipping the coin rapidly and repeatedly—he sometimes performs a sleight of hand and forces tears, crying, and the sorrowful emotions with which they are associated to assume the metacommunicative charge of laughter.

It must be emphasized that Ovid's legerdemain with metacommunication is only made possible by the fact that Ovid elsewhere observes convention. The trick's impact in some sense is a metacommunicative manifestation of the incongruity theory of laughter; expectations must first be set in order for them later to be defied. In the passage from *Ars Amatoria* 3 discussed above, crying (vv. 291-2) is mentioned in the couplet following the treatment of laughter (vv. 279-90), but the metacommunicative cues for laughter appear in the verses that contain the vocabulary of laughter. After the only other appearance of the vocabulary of laughter in *Ars Amatoria* 3, the *praeceptor amoris* presents an argument for why women should avoid mournful behavior. He does so in such a histrionic manner that a term indicating extreme sorrow acts as a final metacommunicative cue in a crescendo to laughter.

In vv. 511-8, the *praeceptor* asserts that sympathetic behavior in facial proxemics is appealing to men. A reserved or melancholy visage is simply hateful:

odimus immodicos (experto credite) fastus:
saepe tacens odii semina uultus habet.
spectantem specta, ridenti mollia ride:
innuet, acceptas tu quoque redde notas.
sic ubi prolusit, rudibus puer ille relictis
spicula de pharetra promit acuta sua.
odimus et maestas: Tecmessam diligat Aiax;
nos hilarem populum femina laeta capit.

We hate (trust the expert) extreme haughtiness:
often the quiet face contains the seeds of hatred.
Observe the one observing you, laugh softly at the one laughing:
If he nods, then you return his nods received.
When he has rehearsed thus, that boy—toys left behind—
puts forth sharp arrows from his quiver.
We hate also gloomy women: Let Ajax love Tecmessa;
The joyful woman captures us, the happy populace.

The instructor plays synaesthetically with sights and sounds. A motionless face is said to be silent (*tacens*, v. 512), and laughter's visible qualities are emphasized by the noiseless actions described before (*specta* in v. 513) and after (*innuet* in v. 514) the laughter itself. With references to a reflection in water and a mirror in v. 506-7, the instructor paves the way for textual representations of reflections throughout the passage.[32] In v. 513 there are two forms of *ridere* on either side of a third word (*ridenti mollia ride*) as well as two terms for observing looking at one another, side by side (*spectantem specta*). In addition to these occasions of standard polyptoton, horizontal textual reflection occurs within v. 515 when alliterative terms of the same number of syllables surround the subject (*rudibus puer ille relictis*). Vertical reflections occur between v. 511 and v. 517 with the doubled line opening *odimus* and again between v. 513 and v. 515 with the s-alliterated verse beginnings. Other intriguing reflections are a loose responsion of letters between *specta* and *acceptas* in vv. 513-4 and, in the same verses, between *ride* and *redde*.[33] Gibson (2003) notes the consonance between *maestas* and *Tecmessam* in v. 517 and suggests that the *praeceptor* may have been particularly attuned to the sounds of names in a passage containing Ajax's name, which is etymologized in Sophocles' *Ajax* with the αἰαῖ sound of lament.

---

32 In v. 506, Pallas sees herself in river water while playing the pipes (*ut uidit uultus Pallas in amne suos*), and in v. 507, the *praeceptor* explicitly mentions the act of looking in a mirror (*uos quoque si media speculum spectetis in ira*). Perhaps to forecast the wordplay to come in vv. 511-8, an inverted gamma telestic appears in the four verses (507-10) that precede this passage:

*uos quoque si media speculum spectetis in ir**a**,*
*cognoscat faciem uix satis ulla sua**m**.*
*nec minus in uultu damnosa superbia uestr**o**:*
*comibus est oculis alliciendus **amor**.*

(I thank my colleague Mathias Hanses for pointing out this telestic to me.)

33 It is also interesting to note that Ovid's portrait of a woman laughing at her laughing love interest in *Ars Amatoria* 3.513 is in fact a mirror reflection of advice the *praeceptor* offers to men in *Ars Amatoria* 2.201-2:

riserit: arride; si flebit, flere memento: 201
imponat leges uultibus illa tuis.

She laughs: laugh back; if she cries, remember to cry: 201
let that one impose laws on your face.

As in Book 3, laughing and crying are paired, and Ovid has the *praeceptor* suggest that laws (*leges* in v. 202) can be imposed on the involuntary behaviors.

With her name alone, Tecmessa gloomily weeps.[34]

Yet less of a mirroring than a "through the looking glass" effect occurs on the emotional level.[35] The emphatic repetition of hatred (*odimus* in vv. 511 and 517 and *odii* in v. 512) in a poem dedicated to love alerts the reader to a play with opposites, between happy and sad, explicit laughter and implicit tears. One verse after the *praeceptor* announces a universal male attraction to joyful women, the coin flips back toward sadness, as the passage culminates in the description of two epically and tragically miserable women in vv. 519-24. The words of the thoroughly uncouth *praeceptor* remain the reader's guide:

> *numquam ego te, Andromache, nec te, Tecmessa, rogarem*
> *ut mea de uobis altera amica foret.* 520
> *credere uix uideor, cum cogar credere partu,*
> *uos ego cum uestris concubuisse uiris.*
> *scilicet Aiaci mulier maestissima dixit*
> *'lux mea' quaeque solent uerba iuuare uiros.*
>
> Never would I ask you, Andromache, nor you, Tecmessa—
> that either of you be my girlfriend. 520
> I can scarcely believe (though I'm forced to because of your progeny)
> that you both bedded down with your husbands.
> And I'm sure that the gloomiest wife to Ajax said,
> "My light!," and whatever words tend to please husbands.

The adjective *maestissima* echoes Tecmessa's name (as at v. 517) and confirms the identity of the *mulier* to which it refers. When read with the remainder of the couplet in v. 524, the adjective

---

34 Gibson (2003) proposes that, through the name play, the instructor "is perhaps suggesting that [Ajax] and Tecmessa deserve one another" (306). For the overlap of *maestus* and tears, cf. Cat. 38.8 and Ov. *Pont*. 2.3.83.

35 In *Metamorphoses* 3.459-62 during Ovid's story of Echo and Narcissus, laughter, tears, and reflections appear in Narcissus' lament as the boy lists flirtations, all of which he could have learned from the *Ars Amatoria*:

> *cum risi, adrides; lacrimas quoque saepe notaui*
> *me lacrimante tuas; nutu quoque signa remittis* 460
> *et, quantum motu formosi suspicor oris,*
> *verba refers aures non peruenientia nostras!*
> ---
> Whenever I laugh, you laugh back; I have often noticed your
> tears when I cried; with a nod you also send back messages 460
> and, as far as I can tell from the motion of your beautiful mouth,
> you relate words that do not arrive at our ears!

Ovid's doubling of terms for laughter playfully engages with the idea that a laughing response to laughter is natural, if not always genuine.

also offers itself as the beginning of the metacommunicative punchline. The caricature of the stereotypical sad wife speaking affectionately to her husband is too much even for the *praeceptor* to sketch without feeling compelled to mark the sentiment as ironic (*scilicet*).[36] A term that, in semantic isolation, would otherwise invite associations with excessive and superlative mourning, crying, and tears is planted in the text as a metacommunicative cue for the incongruous response of laughter.

If one looks back at the passage as a whole from vv. 511-24, the graduality of Ovid's preparations for inviting laughter through tears and laughter becomes apparent. The vocabulary of laughter in v. 513 (*spectantem specta, ridenti mollia ride*) is the earliest metacommunicative cue. The latter half of the verse offers a concentrated use of laughter-related terms and functions as part of the playful visual game of textual reflections cleverly signposted in the first half of the verse. In vv. 513-4, flirtations are mirrored back and forth, and then, in the following couplet (vv. 515-6), the *praeceptor* introduces Cupid, arrows sharpened, to imply that a love connection is in the making. But before there is time to celebrate, the instructor's utter loathing for sad women (v. 517) overwhelms him and undercuts any amorous levity, only to be positively reframed as affection for happy women in the second line of the same couplet. The emotional and behavioral tone of the passage flips between laughter and tears, hatred and love, earnestness and irony, and by the time the *praeceptor* offers his last literary-historical *exemplum*, a superlative term for grief effortlessly carries the metacommunicative power of a peal of laughter. Ovid all but demands that his readers laugh when, in vv. 523-4, he has the *praeceptor* imagine the saddest woman in the world exclaiming sweet blandishments to the husband who, he neglects to mention, acquired

36 *OLD* s.v. *scilicet* 4. It is possible that such an ironic use of *scilicet* allows for, or at least encourages, the crossing of metacommunicative signals in this passage. The *praeceptor* also uses *scilicet* at *Ars*. 3.111 to hammer home an ironic point about Tecmessa. In a note on the same verse, Gibson (2003) 133 speculates that Ovid may be using Tecmessa as a means to critique Horace, who refers to her at *Carm*. 2.4.5. For a discussion of genre inversion, see Volk (2006) 250.

her as war-booty.[37] Through his amatory persona in *Ars.* 3, Ovid explores notions of love through hatred, happiness through sadness, and, as I argue, the metacommunicative power of laughter through the language of sorrow.

Whatever the merits of this last hypothesis, I return to laughter as a mainstay of Ovidian amatory poetry in the final chapter. For now, I restate my basic argument that textual laughter often functions as a form of metacommunication that, at its strongest, stimulates a laughing response in a reader and, at its mildest, communicates to the reader that laughter is a viable response to the text. Though I have explored my argument with treatments of examples in Vergil's, Horace's, and Ovid's poetry, many more occasions of metacommunicative laughter exist in Augustan poetry, Latin literature, and, as I suspect, most any literature with a vocabulary for laughter and the risible.

Section III: A Challenge for Metacommunicative Laughter

Before shifting my focus in the remaining chapters to laughter's relationship to genre in Augustan poetry, I would like to return to the text with which I began my first chapter: Horace's *Ars Poetica.* Rather than resume my former investigation of laughter as a literary critical tool, I now turn my attention to a unique use of laughter as metacommunication in the last lines (particularly in v. 476) of this poem. The final verse reads not as an independent sentence but as a dangling phrase comparing a mad, reciting poet to "a leech refusing to release the flesh until full of blood" (*non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo*). The use of metacommunicative laughter here is noteworthy precisely because there is no laughter in the verse. In fact, the

37 As if emotional schizophrenia were not sufficient to keep the passage interesting, Ovid incorporates generic layers through the women he mentions. Tecmessa, the war-prize of Ajax, certainly cannot be the subject of *capit* in v. 518, nor can she be happy if she is to appear in Sophocles' tragedy. Andromache's *Iliadic* travails are even better known, but, as Gibson (2003) notes, "It is typically Ovidian to ignore the fact that the widowed and exiled Andromache had little reason to be a model of *hilaritas*" (306).

relevant vocabulary for laughter appears at the beginning of the poem in v. 5:

humano capiti ceruicem pictor equinam
iungere si uelit et uarias inducere plumas
undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,
spectatum admissi, risum teneatis, amici? 5
credite, Pisones, isti tabulae fore librum
persimilem, cuius, uelut aegri somnia, uanae
fingentur species, ut nec pes nec caput uni
reddatur formae.

If a painter should wish to connect an equine neck
to a human head and to introduce variegated feathers
to limbs gathered from everywhere, so that a woman
beautiful on top would taper repulsively into a black fish,
after being allowed to look on, friends, would you repress a laugh? 5
Suppose, Pisones, that, just like that painting, there were
a book, whose appearances, like the dreams
of a sick man, are fashioned fleeting, so neither foot nor head
are rendered in one form.

As I proposed in Chapter 1, Horace alludes to and employs a critical function of laughter in these verses and those that immediately follow. Incongruous works can provoke a form of negative criticism that is expressed through laughter, and Horace implies that his readers, internally identified as the Pisones, would hardly be able to keep from laughing if they were confronted with such a monstrous composite spectacle as that described in vv. 1-4. The response is presented as involuntary and seemingly unrestrainable. Also in Chapter 1, I examined how Horace repeatedly presents the vocabulary of laughter in his second book of *Epistles* and in the *Ars Poetica* as a form of critical reception for bad art in general and bad literature more specifically.

What, then, does this passage from the beginning of the *Ars Poetica* have to do with the end of the poem? It will surprise few that Horace, who plays the dual, oft-simultaneous roles of poet and critic, is attuned to beginnings and endings. In the *Ars*, his focus is on the head and foot of his own work. In v. 1, Horace places the word "head" (*capiti*) as the second word of the poem. A reference to a head and foot (*nec pes nec caput*) follows close on this first one's heels in v. 8

when Horace makes a verbal gesture to unity (*uni*, modifying *formae* in v. 9). A work is implicitly defined as unified when its head and foot come together into one form. Thus the last line of Horace's poem—the foot—warrants some attention.

In the final passage of the same poem, Horace presents a portrait of a deranged poet who exhibits very unstable behavior:

> *Nec satis apparet cur uersus factitet, utrum* 470
> *minxerit in patrios cineres, an triste bidental*
> *mouerit incestus; certe furit, ac uelut ursus,*
> *obiectos caueae ualuit si frangere clatros,*
> *indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus;*
> *quem uero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo,* 475
> *non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo.*
>
> Nor is it apparent why he churns out verses, whether 470
> he pissed on his father's ashes or, unclean, he disturbed
> a solemn temple; clearly he is mad, and like a bear,
> if strong enough to break the obstructing bars of a cage,
> the strident reciter routes the unlearned and learned:
> truly whomever he has laid hold of, he holds and kills by reading, 475
> a leech refusing to release the flesh until full of blood.

The visuals come one on top of the other, and a reader might reasonably ask whether or not the images Horace introduces in these closing verses observe the ideals of simplicity and unity which the poet invokes in v. 23 (*simplex . . . et unum*). A urinating poet, rampaging bear, and a deadly *recitator* become components of an inextricably incongruous mishmash, with the leech clinging onto the poem's final verse without so much as a word to introduce it.

But what if Horace is actually making his work "simple and one" by tacking an incongruous image onto the end? What if the lethal-peeing-poet-bear-leech of vv. 470-76 is offered to parallel the feathered-multilimbed-lady-fish-horse of vv. 1-4?[38] Let us grant for the moment that Horace does use two incongruous images to bring the head and foot of his poem

38 Laird (2007) observes of Horace's closing verses that the "rapid conjunction of ideas and images involving sickness and hybridisation of the human with the bestial does recall the humorous supposition at the beginning of the *Ars Poetica*" (136); he goes on to ascribe a thematic ring-composition to the poem as a whole (137).

into one form. A problem then arises like the one encountered in the discussion of amalgamous beast in Chapter 1. There I suggested that a composite monster is in fact defined by its incongruity and that a paradox resides in the fact that what is incongruous by definition or design only becomes "incongruous" when it reveals itself to be, in some way congruent. Is this not what Horace does? He paints a monstrous image in the opening lines and immediately suggests that such an image would be deserving of laughter. Moreover, his verses textually illustrate the laughable incongruity to which he refers. He shortly thereafter declares that a work can be anything "so long as it is simple and one" (v. 23). Finally, nearly 450 verses later and just as the poem is drawing to a close, Horace presents a final composite image of a crazed poet. The potential paradox lies in the idea that when Horace presents his final incongruous image, he enacts a congruity that, in some sense, renders the explicitly-laughable incongruous image from the opening no longer incongruous. Like an expertly rendered painting of a Scylla, Horace's *Ars Poetica* becomes *simplex . . . et unum* by way of its incongruity.

Thus the readers who have been indirectly invited to laugh since the beginning of the poem are left wondering if there is anything remaining to laugh at. The first metacommunicative cue to laughter is offered with *risum teneatis* in v. 5, but it is not until the poem's conclusion that the readers realize that they do not even know the answer to what at first seemed a single, simple rhetorical question and then seemed to be a metacommunicative plant. Instead, readers are left to puzzle if it is significant that the first word of the poem is *humano* and the last is *hirudo*; if Horace's monstrous, chimaeric opening (*caput*) and his rambling, polymorphous closing (*pes*) enact a satisfactory ring-composition; if the standard Horace uses to suggest bad poetry's laughability at the beginning is instead the standard he strives to realize and consequently upend at the end; and if, after being allowed to examine a poem like the *Ars Poetica*, they would repress a laugh.

PART II: JOCULAR GENRES (CHAPTERS 4, 5, AND 6)

PUZZLING LAUGHTER IN SATIRE, BUCOLIC, AND ELEGY

People tend to associate laughter with specific genres in much the same way that we associate laughter with specific occasions. Conventional audience reactions to popular film or television genres offer one way of illustrating this. A disappointed viewer may turn off a studio-billed "romantic comedy" or a network-identified "sit-com" thinking, *That was a disappointment; I didn't laugh once*. The same viewer watches a "drama" or an "action-thriller" with little, if any, expectation of laughing. These, however, are audience responses—the viewer's laughter or lack thereof. What about laughter *within* a film? A laugh written into the script or indicated, perhaps alongside a smile, in a character's stage directions? Is the presence or absence of laughter within a work associated with specific genres?

One might reasonably answer "yes," and point to the evidence provided by a laugh track in TV sit-coms.[1] Laugh tracks are often used in television sit-coms, and sit-coms are indeed comedies in name ("situational comedies"). But a recorded track of laughter is hardly an unproblematic occasion of laughter *within* a film or TV show. In the previous chapters, I hypothesized a literary "laugh track" that is embedded in the text and triggered by the appearance of the vocabulary of laughter. An aural laugh track for a TV show is typically presented as a surrogate audience reaction. It is offered as if nested in a different layer than the audio-visual experience of the show's content, and whether it pretends to be or, in the case of a live studio audience, actually is an audience response, the laugh track operates both inside and outside a work. It simultaneously creates, and functions as, part of the spectacle.

The laugh track in comic television has occasionally assumed a different role in the past

1 See Chapter 2, p. 86 n. 1 for a discussion of some of the research on laugh tracks.

two decades, in particular through a genre of television known by some as "cringe comedy."[2] The BBC's (and NBC's) *The Office*, HBO's *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, and ABC's *Modern Family* all eschew the once ubiquitous sit-com laugh track and purport to trust the audience to decide when something warrants a laughing response. By embracing a pseudo-documentary (or "mockumentary") aesthetic, this format of comedy is identified in part by the *absence* of prerecorded laughter. No studio audience. No laugh track. Yet no one would claim that the aforementioned shows contain *no* laughter. Ricky Gervais' character David Brent in the original BBC version of *The Office* routinely makes inappropriate jokes, snickering awkwardly when no other character laughs at his discomfiting behavior. In an episode of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* entitled "The Freak Book," Larry David's character (who shares his name with the actor) offers uproarious and insensitive laughter in response to a coffee table book filled with pictures of "freaks." And even though the family-oriented (and, to my thinking, less cringeworthy) *Modern Family* does away with a laugh track, characters, like the jokester father Phil Dunphy played by Ty Burrell, routinely voice assorted giggles and laughs as they go about their day-to-day interactions.

The laughter offered by these characters may lead to a laughing response from the viewership, but not necessarily a sympathetic or congruent one—hence, the "cringe" of this comedy. These shows offer potential screen parallels to the hypothesis I explore in the previous chapters about a textual laugh track. The laughs are embedded in the spectacle and not offered in a separate laugh track.

There are undoubtedly film and television shows that provoke laughter while only rarely presenting laughter.[3] Conversely, there are film and television shows that depict laughs with no

2 Wilson (2012) uses the term "cringe comedy" in reference to *Curb Your Enthusiasm* in an article entitled "Louis C.K. and the Rise of the Laptop Loners."

3 Of the popular British dark comedy "Withnail & I," de Frein (2011) notes, "Not a single instance of laughter was scripted for any of the characters." The film does contain brief moments of derisive and drunken laughter,

apparent objective of provoking an audience's laughter. "Action-thriller" films in which a hero labors to thwart the evil plans of a villain routinely make use of sinister laughter. The villain's piercing cackle or plodding (or plotting), echoing, "muah-hah-hah" designates him or her as somehow unhinged. Why? Perhaps because the laughter itself is incongruous and asymmetrical. The baddie laughs at pain and suffering, be it anticipated or already accomplished, and the baddie laughs alone (with the occasional exception of an accomplice taking behavioral cues from the temperamental head honcho). Typical victims, on the other hand, do not laugh, especially when they are experiencing pain and suffering at the hands of the villain. Nor does the typical audience member laugh. Thus, even though an "action-thriller" may not elicit an audience's laughter—or "external" laughter, the genre uses "internal" laughter as a behavior that is typical of a stock character. As a result, a belief that laughter is associated with specific genres in film and television becomes more complicated when a distinction is drawn between "external" laughter (i.e., the laughter of audience response) and "internal" laughter (i.e., laughter that appears *within* the work itself).

A cursory consideration of two titles of classical scholarship that mention laughter reveals that the same distinction can be drawn where literature and genre expectations are involved. Erich Segal's work *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus* is, as the second half of the title indicates, a treatment of Plautine comedy. Roman laughter, whether as a behavioral or cultural phenomenon, is not examined at any length in the work, but comedy, being a dramatic genre commonly associated with audience laughter, is expertly treated.[4] To use my distinction between “external” and “internal” laughter, the laughter in Segal's title is essentially "external" to the book. *The Function of Humour in Roman Verse Satire: Laughter and Lying* by Maria Plaza

but the laughter of the audience seems in no way dependent upon it.

4 Segal (1967) states, "Laughter is an affirmation of shared values" in the first sentence of his original preface, but he promptly turns to comedy in the remainder of the paragraph and the work as a whole.

explores humor in the satires of Horace, Persius, and Juvenal, but the author clarifies in her introduction that “laughter as a physical act” falls outside of the scope of her work. Indeed, Plaza generally treats laughter as a metonym for humor, and in so doing, she demonstrates that the first half of her title encapsulates the book's content more accurately than the second. Plaza's laughter, like Segal's, is “external” to her work; it's a titular stand-in for a typical response to humor rather than an object of textual inquiry in itself.[5]

Internal laughter or laughter "as a textual act" remains my point of departure in the following three chapters, much as it was in the previous chapters' treatment of laughter as a textual cue to reader response. Comedy, satire, and bucolic appear in these pages only insofar as they correlate to the appearance of the vocabulary of laughter and the risible in the poetry under discussion, but, as I believe, correlate they do. In what follows, I explore the use of laughter as a genre-specific phenomenon in books and poems of Augustan poetry, with the bulk of my attention focused upon the first book of *Satires* by Horace, the *Eclogues* of Vergil, and Ovid's *Amores*. My treatment of the poems unfolds in two phases: first, with my noting and interpreting the appearance or absence of the vocabulary for laughter and the risible in given works; and, second, with my asserting that such presence or absence appears in generically charged locations and is thus generically significant in itself. I do not aim to recast the scholarly discussion of genre in a comprehensive sense but to explore a specific phenomenon—the marked use of laughter—in specific works of Augustan poetry and to treat this phenomenon as both a symptom and cause of wider generic experimentation and play in the works under discussion.

The Genre of Genre Theory

An abundance of scholarship has been dedicated to ancient and modern genre theory,

5 For contrast, Plaza's *Laughter and Derision in Petronius' Satyrica: A Literary Study* (2000) explicitly occupies itself with “internal” laughter (e.g., p. 3).

much of which has been completed thoroughly enough that one may opt (as I do) to summarize and appropriate definitions and arguments rather than lay out what would otherwise amount to an insufficiently original perspective on the development of genre theory.[6] If anything, my summation and appropriation err on the side of selectivity so as to provide the theoretical background most pertinent to the texts and ideas with which the present study is concerned.

The "genre of genre theory" in the current section's title refers to what seems obligatory background theory in treatments of genre in ancient literature, and the *auctores* of this metagenre are Plato and Aristotle. Only foolishly would one deny the existence of conceptions of literary genres before Plato and Aristotle or the elaboration of these conceptions in the years separating Aristotle from the Augustan poets, but passages of the *Poetics* and, to a lesser extent, the *Republic* remain the most frequently cited extant theories of Classical genre and the most relevant to my own discussion of laughter and genre in Augustan poetry. For my part, I stress the ideas of genre presented in Plato's and Aristotle's extant works from the 4th c. BCE, but I also acknowledge the ample evidence of genre awareness in less explicitly theoretical work. No reader would doubt that Theocritus believed himself to be composing differently from Sappho, and Sappho from Homer, however many the similarities between their works.[7] I designate this as "genre awareness", and I focus on the genre awareness on display in the poetry written after Aristotle's *Poetics* and before Vergil's *Eclogues* so as to shed additional light on practical treatments of genre that may have influenced the Augustan poets.

Perhaps modern genre theory so often looks back to the theories set forth in the prose works of Plato and Aristotle for the very reason that these works approach literary theory in plain

6 Kroll (1924), Cairns (1972), and Conte (1984a) remain the foundational works on genre in Classical literature. Derrida (1980) and Fowler (1982) offer a glimpse at the broader field of genre criticism. Barchiesi (2001) and Farrell (2003) present variant surveys of ancient genre theory before recommending new directions in the study of ancient genre. Samplings of some of these new directions explored in works of Latin literature are available in Laird, ed. (2006) and Papanghelis, Harrison, and Frangoulides, eds. (2013).

7 See, for example, the anti-Homeric priamel of Sappho's fr. 16.

speech (setting aside the question of whether Platonic speech is ever "plain").[8] Unlike Horace the "poet-critic" in the *Ars Poetica*, Aristotle is classified by Brink as an "external" critic who does not participate in the versified traditions he treats, and, with that being the criterium, we must describe Plato also as an "external" critic. Both philosophers comment on poetic genre as outsiders, both being originally descriptive rather than prescriptive in their systematizations, and it is unlikely that either thinker believed he was setting forth original laws of poetic genre rather than observing and recording prevailing opinion. To judge from Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics*, prevailing opinion reflects a trifecta of players in genre differentiation, starting with 1) variations in the narrative structure (which both Plato and Aristotle observe), and culminating in distinctions Aristotle draws between 2) the subject matter and 3) the poetic meter of different works of poetry.

In Book 3 of the *Republic*, as Socrates and Adeimantus discuss what sort of literature would be available in the ideal state, Socrates distinguishes between three different approaches to narration: pure narration (ἁπλῆ διήγησις), mimetic narration (διὰ μιμήσεως), and a narrative mixture of the two (δι᾽ἀμφοτέρων).[9] Adeimantus has trouble understanding what Socrates means, and so Socrates selects passages from the *Iliad* to illustrate pure narration (when Homer speaks as himself) and mimetic narration (when Homer speaks as Chryses). As these distinctions finally click for Adeimantus, he volunteers that mimetic narration is the narrative style used in tragedy (394b), an observation that prompts Socrates to suggest generic parallels for each type of narration. Socrates notes that mimetic narration is used in comedy as well as tragedy, that pure narration—or narration "through recital by the poet himself" (δι' ἀπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ)—is used in lyric dithyrambs, and that a narrative mixture in which a narrator's voice

8 Rosenmeyer (2006) 427 asserts, "Plato is not . . . a literary theorist," but he treats his pronouncements on genre at length.

9 *Resp.* 392d. See the introduction, pp. 16-17.

(e.g., Homer's) is interspersed with direct quotations of characters (e.g., Achilles') is used in epic poems, among others (394c).[10]

Socrates' broad delineation of generic types in the *Republic* (drama, lyric, and epic) hinges upon a formal component of literature: the narrative mode. Yet narrative mode is not the formal element cited as a generic determinant in subsequent theoretical treatments of genre, nor here should it be considered a determinant as opposed to, more conservatively, a correlate. Adeimantus and Socrates together in their speech demonstrate that there exist terms for tragedy, comedy, dithyramb, and epic. The existence of the terminology itself—the fact that tragedy and comedy carry different names despite using the same narrative mode—suggests that Socrates and Adeimantus share an understanding of differences between types of poetry that is independent of variations in narrative structure. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle provides alternative explanations for generic differentiation. Even so, the tripartite division in narrative modes that Plato's Socrates presents in the *Republic* is revisited in Aristotle's *Poetics*, though, tellingly, in a marginalized manner that redirects emphasis to a poem's metrics. Beginning with Aristotle, Plato's successors in literary theory stress the role of meter in determining the genre of a literary work.

Aristotle models an approach to genre theory that observes greater specificity and a willingness to divide and subdivide concepts. Narrative mode is mentioned in the opening chapter of the *Poetics* as the last of three respects in which poetic imitations differ from one another:

> ἐποποιία δὴ καὶ ἡ τῆς τραγῳδίας ποίησις ἔτι δὲ κωμῳδία καὶ ἡ διθυραμβοποιητικὴ καὶ τῆς αὐλητικῆς ἡ πλείστη καὶ κιθαριστικῆς πᾶσαι τυγχάνουσιν οὖσαι μιμήσεις τὸ σύνολον· διαφέρουσι δὲ ἀλλήλων τρισίν, ἢ γὰρ τῷ ἐν ἑτέροις μιμεῖσθαι ἢ τῷ ἕτερα ἢ τῷ ἑτέρως καὶ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον. (1447a13-18)

10 See Rosenmeyer (2006) 424-5 for our ignorance of what the dithyramb was at the time of Plato's writing. Plato's Socrates does anticipate some of the ethical arguments that appear in Aristotle's discussion of the different objects of poetic imitation. At 395c he argues guardians should imitate what is appropriate to them, and then lists good qualities: ἐὰν δὲ μιμῶνται, μιμεῖσθαι τὰ τούτοις προσήκοντα [. . .]

> Epic poetry and the creation of tragedy and, still, comedy and the dithyrambic production and the majority of pipe and lyre pieces all happen to be imitation, in general; they differ from one another in three ways, for they imitate either 1) in different ways, or 2) different things, or 3) differently and not in the same manner.

In a passage placing a premium on differences, the use of a more diverse vocabulary by Aristotle would perhaps have aided in immediate comprehension, though the theorist proceeds to explain what each of the three groupings entails. The first grouping lists different forms of artistic production (e.g., music, dance, literature) and, within the more restricted scope of poetic arts, different uses of rhythm, song, and meter (1447b25). The second grouping refers to differences in the objects of imitation, the options for which are, quite simply, average people, better than average (virtuous) people, or worse than average (vicious) people. The third group, entailing differences of the manner (τρόπον) of imitation, offers Aristotle's paraphrase of the three narrative modes listed in the Platonic text of the *Republic*.

Though Aristotle contributes no apparent nuance to the division of narrative modes (and perhaps for this reason relegates its treatment to little more than a footnote at the end of his opening discussion), his first two groupings demarcate an arena for generic theory, and, more specially, literary and poetic theory, that is left only hazily circumscribed in Plato. The description of the different forms of artistic production (Aristotle's first division in 1447a19-28) allows him to acknowledge the kinship between literary production and other creative arts before zooming in to restrict his scope to literary arts. Similarly, he acknowledges that ποίησις using "bare words" (τοῖς λόγοις ψιλοῖς) comprises both prose and poetry, but, as he shifts his focus to the nomenclature of metrical forms, he swiftly and subtly zooms further in and narrows his focus, and his reader's attention, to verse:

> πλὴν οἱ ἄνθρωποί γε συνάπτοντες τῷ μέτρῳ τὸ ποιεῖν ἐλεγειοποιοὺς τοὺς δὲ ἐποποιοὺς ὀνομάζουσιν, οὐχ ὡς κατὰ τὴν μίμησιν ποιητὰς ἀλλὰ κοινῇ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον προσαγορεύοντες· καὶ γὰρ ἂν ἰατρικὸν ἢ φυσικόν τι διὰ τῶν μέτρων

ἐκφέρωσιν, οὕτω καλεῖν εἰώθασιν· (1447b13-17)

> But people, by attaching "maker" to the meter name, specify elegy-makers and epic-makers, calling them poets not according to their imitation but, by common consent, according to their meter. For even if they produce some medical or physics-related work in meter, they are accustomed to speak of it in this way.

Aristotle indicates a custom (κοινῇ and εἰώθασιν) of identifying poetry by its meter. Even though he subsequently implies that he might favor a different method of classification ("But there is nothing common to Homer and Empedocles besides their meter, for which reason it is right to call the former a poet but to call the latter a physical scientist rather than a poet."),[11] the consensus is that different types (i.e., genres) of poetry are designated by names according to the meters in which they are written.

Whatever Aristotle's ultimate preference, the fact that he sees fit to mention meter so early in his treatment of the different types of poetic representation forecasts an ongoing awareness and privileging of metrics where genre is under examination in the *Poetics*. A skeptical reader might argue that the early treatment of meter marks the discussion as obligatory, as if Aristotle were saying, "Most folks speak of genre in this way, and I have to acknowledge it first, but I'm not convinced it is the best means for differentiating genres." Indeed, in his subsequent discussion, Aristotle introduces a previously unattested and still-influential theory regarding different genres, namely, the idea that a poet's character determines, or is reflected in, the forms his or her poetic creations take.

> διεσπάσθη δὲ κατὰ τὰ οἰκεῖα ἤθη ἡ ποίησις· οἱ μὲν γὰρ σεμνότεροι τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων, οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι τὰς τῶν φαύλων, πρῶτον ψόγους ποιοῦντες, ὥσπερ ἕτεροι ὕμνους καὶ ἐγκώμια. (1448b24-27)
>
> Poetry was split according to its innate characters; the more honorable men were imitating fine deeds and the deeds of fine men, but the meaner men were imitating the

11 Arist. *Poet*. 1447b17-20: οὐδὲν δὲ κοινόν ἐστιν Ὁμήρῳ καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλεῖ πλὴν τὸ μέτρον, διὸ τὸν μὲν ποιητὴν δίκαιον καλεῖν, τὸν δὲ φυσιολόγον μᾶλλον ἢ ποιητήν. Else (1963) 40 observes of these lines that "interpretations have spread in all directions here," and, fittingly enough, he proceeds to offer an interpretation that differs from my own in placing substantially less emphasis on meter.

deeds of lesser men, first writing lampoons, just as the others wrote hymns and encomia.

The passage presents a genealogy of poetic genres that correspond to the ethical tendencies of the poets themselves. This ethical component of genre is stressed throughout the *Poetics*, although, in passages other than this one, Aristotle places greater emphasis on the character of the individuals represented within the poetry as a determinant of genre and less emphasis on the characters of those composing the poetry.[12]

Aristotle makes it approximately one sentence beyond his description of poetry's generic *qua* ethical split before he notes that the fitting (τὸ ἁρμόττον) meter for lampoons is iambic (1448b30-32).[13] If his initial mention of the division of poetic types along metrical lines was in fact obligatory, he seems to recognize that he is writing in an intellectual environment in which this obligation can never be discharged. Meter repeatedly functions as a keystone—a noteworthy factor when not a fundamental determinant—in Aristotelian generic differentiation in the *Poetics*. In his treatment of epic, Aristotle observes, "Epic poetry differs [from tragedy] in length and meter."[14] He then sets forth the proper scope of an epic work before describing "heroic meter" and comparing it to other meters:

> τὸ δὲ μέτρον τὸ ἡρωικὸν ἀπὸ τῆς πείρας ἥρμοκεν. εἰ γάρ τις ἐν ἄλλῳ τινὶ μέτρῳ διηγηματικὴν μίμησιν ποιοῖτο ἢ ἐν πολλοῖς, ἀπρεπὲς ἂν φαίνοιτο· τὸ γὰρ ἡρωικὸν στασιμώτατον καὶ ὀγκωδέστατον τῶν μέτρων ἐστίν (διὸ καὶ γλώττας καὶ μεταφορὰς δέχεται μάλιστα· περιττὴ γὰρ καὶ ἡ διηγηματικὴ μίμησις τῶν ἄλλων), τὸ δὲ ἰαμβεῖον καὶ τετράμετρον κινητικὰ καὶ τὸ μὲν ὀρχηστικὸν τὸ δὲ πρακτικόν. ἔτι δὲ ἀτοπώτερον εἰ μιγνύοι τις αὐτά, ὥσπερ Χαιρήμων. διὸ οὐδεὶς μακρὰν σύστασιν ἐν ἄλλῳ πεποίηκεν ἢ τῷ ἡρῴῳ, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ εἴπομεν αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις διδάσκει τὸ ἁρμόττον αὐτῇ αἱρεῖσθαι. (1459b31-1460a5)

The heroic meter has been found fitting through experimentation. For if someone should

12 Farrell (2003), in treating this passage, places undue emphasis on the idea that "Genre is thus an expression of character" (384). He would have been more accurate to note that genre *was* an expression of character in its origin (as the Greek verb tense itself indicates).

13 I was surprised to learn that the term more often used in the *Poetics* to designate the "fitting" is not τὸ πρεπόν but τὸ ἁρμόττον.

14 Διαφέρει δὲ κατά τε τῆς συστάσεως τὸ μῆκος ἡ ἐποποιία καὶ τὸ μέτρον. (1459b17-18) At 1449b9-20, Aristotle briefly describes the differences between tragedy and epic in anticipation of this later argument, though he inverts the order there and mentions meter before length.

> produce a narrative imitation in some one other meter or in many, it would appear unfitting; the heroic meter is the most stately and weighty of the meters (for which reason it is especially accommodating of foreign words and metaphors; narrative imitation is thereby beyond others), but the iambic and the tetrameter are kinetic, the latter good for dancing and the former for action. Still, if someone should mix these, as Chairemon did, it would be quite out of place. Therefore no one has created a long composition in any other meter than the heroic one, but just as we said, nature herself teaches the fitting meter for each to choose.

When Aristotle turns to the explanatory power of nature (φύσις) at the end of the quoted passage, the simplicity of his argument is laid bare: the content of poetry is "naturally" suited to a given meter. His line of reasoning is hardly compelling in itself; to assert that an epic-by-content would simply "appear unfitting" if composed in a meter other than hexameter may well fail to convince a skeptic who is not beholden to this particular aesthetic. But skeptics do not appear to be on Aristotle's radar. His readership's agreement is assumed, and the argument here and throughout the *Poetics* unfolds in such a way that an innate connection between meter and content (the "objects of imitation") seems a point of natural agreement.

Though several other things are said to occur *according to* nature in the *Poetics* (e.g., the work itself begins with the things that are first "according to nature"—κατὰ φύσιν in 1447a12), “nature” in the nominative (φύσις) functions as an agent on only one other occasion in the work, in another passage that pertains to meter and is particularly relevant to the explorations of this chapter:

> τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον τετραμέτρῳ ἐχρῶντο διὰ τὸ σατυρικὴν καὶ ὀρχηστικωτέραν εἶναι τὴν ποίησιν, λέξεως δὲ γενομένης αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις τὸ οἰκεῖον μέτρον εὗρε· μάλιστα γὰρ λεκτικὸν τῶν μέτρων τὸ ἰαμβεῖόν ἐστιν· σημεῖον δὲ τούτου, πλεῖστα γὰρ ἰαμβεῖα λέγομεν ἐν τῇ διαλέκτῳ τῇ πρὸςἀλλήλους, ἑξάμετρα δὲ ὀλιγάκις καὶ ἐκβαίνοντες τῆς λεκτικῆς ἁρμονίας. (1449a22-29)
>
> For at first they [*sc*. the tragedians] used tetrameter on account of their productions being like satyr plays and being fit for dancing, but after diction became a factor, **nature herself** discovered the innate meter; for, of the meters, iambic is particularly suited to colloquial speech; proof of this is that we generally speak iambs in conversation with one another, but we speak hexameters rarely and only by transgressing the registers of colloquial speech.

Aristotle's argumentation, that tragic poets embraced iambic meter because it manifests the tendencies of colloquial speech (and he has recently finished telling his readers that tragedy, being wholly mimetic, is relayed through dialogue), is at least anecdotally scientific.[15] By invoking the behavior of Greek speakers, even if he fails to cite quantitative linguistic studies, Aristotle might reasonably expect to convince another Greek speaker (or reader) of the "natural" connection between the iambic meter and a genre that imitates speech and conversation. One suspects, for reasons that will become clear in the following chapters, that the speakers in Horace's *Sermones* and in Vergil's *Eclogues* would disagree.[16]

Aristotle writes at length about tragedy and epic in the *Poetics*, and his lost treatise on comedy (to which he refers at *Poetics* 1449b22) would have contained much of value to my treatment of the literary uses of laughter in poetry.[17] I have focused my attention in the preceding pages on his remarks on meter, not only because of an impression that he himself emphasizes them—both by the locations in which, and the frequency with which, he makes them—but because meter and formal components of a poem remain the *sine qua non* in treatments of generic theory in the work of the Augustan poets.

Though sustained treatments of genre between the time of Aristotle's writings and the Augustan era are relatively few and far between, there is no reason to suspect that meter became any less important in considerations of poetic genre during the intervening years of the Hellenistic period. Nor is there reason to think that authors writing literature in this period were

15 A similar argument is anecdotally applied to the prevalence of iambic meters in English poetry.

16 This argument could probably be supplemented by a brief return to Aristotle's comments on the lampoon in 1448b30-32. For other Latin authors who might disagree with the “natural” connection between speech and meter, cf. the passage in *Tristia* 4.10.23-6 where Ovid says that he can't help but write in meter.

17 Janko (1984) 63 states, “That a second book of the *Poetics* was not only planned by Aristotle, but also written, is clear beyond doubt,” before offering supporting evidence of his claim. Janko concludes that the *Tractatus Coislinianus* comprises “Aristotelian material” (77), and he goes to far as to present a hypothetical reconstruction of *Poetics: Book 2* (92-99). See p. 33 n. 53 in the introduction for a discussion of scholarly disagreement regarding the relationship of the *Tractatus* to a lost second book of the *Poetics*.

any less aware of generic differences between their own and others' creations—or even unaware of differences between poems within their own *corpora*. Whether meter remained the customary means of identifying poetic genres, as it seems to have been when Aristotle wrote *Poetics* 1447b13-17, Hellenistic poets composed works of varying lengths, on varied themes, and employing a variety of different meters. The extant poems of Callimachus, to whom the *Suda* ascribes "such great diligence that he wrote poems in every meter,"[18] include short epigrams of a single elegiac distich, lengthier iambic poems, hexametric hymns to the gods (the *Bath of Pallas* in elegiac couplets being a metrical outlier), a four-book collection of aetiological elegies (the *Aetia*), and an epyllion (*Hecale*) of approximately one thousand hexameter verses.[19] Different meters correspond to different themes and, importantly in Callimachus' *oeuvre*, to varying lengths of works.[20] Formal attributes take precedence.

Callimachus' literary criticism, embedded in poems such as the prologue to the *Aetia*, focuses on the magnitude and scope of poetic projects, and his poems reflect little sympathy for works of outsize ambition. Yet even though he equates a big book with a bad book (τὸ μέγα βιβλίον ἴσον [. . .] τῷ μεγάλῳ κακῷ)[21] and must have been familiar with Aristotle's identification of length and meter as the determinants of epic at *Poetics* 1459b17-18 (see n. 14 above), the hexameter—the presumed meter of "big, bad books"—looms large in Callimachus' poetry. Callimachus and other Hellenistic authors including Aratus, Theocritus, and Apollonius disentangle and rearrange meter, theme, and length and demonstrate a more flexible approach to genre than anything outlined in Aristotelian theory. For example, a Homeric precedent exists for the use of hexameter in Callimachus' hymns, but his *Hecale*, with its unexpectedly humble focus

18 Suda: οὕτω δὲ γέγονεν ἐπιμελέστατος, ὡς γράψαι μὲν ποιήματα εἰς πᾶν μέτρον. (Adler number = kappa 227)
19 On the length of the *Hecale*, see Appendix II of Hollis (1990).
20 Brink (1946) 16-19 summarizes Callimachus' comments on length and criticism of lengthy poetry.
21 Callimachus fr. 465 Pf.

and less-than-epic length, frustrates many expectations of epic hexametric verse and establishes itself as a distinct category of pseudo-epic.[22] Likewise, Theocritus' bucolics recast the hexameter as alternately bawdy and humble; the meter is employed to relay such action as the singing competitions of shepherds and the love-laments of a cyclops.

The multigeneric activities and innovations of poets like Callimachus and Theocritus will suffice for the moment as practical evidence that genre and meter remained literary concerns during the Hellenistic period.[23] Theoretical treatments of genre during this period indicate a similar awareness. As carbonized texts recovered from the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum have become decipherable due to industrious scholarship and advances in technology, literary theories held by Philodemus as well as theories attributed in the Epicurean philosopher's text to various other authors and texts (including Aristotelian texts that are no longer extant) have received renewed attention.[24] There is little in Philodemus' work to suggest that he subscribed to substantially different perspectives on genre from those presented in Aristotle, but the fact that he dedicates any attention to treatments of genre and meter suggests that the topic remained a source of at least consideration, and more likely debate, in the period. One need only note that Philodemus' text presents (and seems to argue against) the perspectives of theorists like Heracleodorus and Crates, who, in Philodemus' telling, were quite radical in their responses to—and even their rejection of—traditional classifications of genre.[25]

Philodemus is a source of Hellenistic literary theories that may have been particularly influential for the Augustan poets, and, moreover, the Epicurean philosopher may have exerted

22 Hollis (1990) 23-6 defends the "category" of Hellenistic epyllion and summarizes Callimachus' hexametric tendencies.

23 Theocritus' experiments with genre receive additional attention in Chapter 5.

24 See Asmis (1992). For an extensive treatment of genre in Philodemus, see Janko (2011) *passim*, but especially 356-7 and 363-7.

25 Janko (2000) reads Philodemus as stating that Heracleodorus "denied the relevance of the traditional genre-divisions and different styles to the merit of poetry; he even denied that of metre, claiming that some prose-writers were poets" (156). Asmis (1992) 167-9 suggests that a fragment in Philodemus that presents one of his opponent's thoughts on genre aligns with Philodemus' presentation of Crates' poetics elsewhere in *On Poets 5*.

his influence directly.[26] A passage from *PHerc. Paris 2*, a fragmentary Herculanean papyrus containing writings attributed to Philodemus, contains a vocative address to Plotius, Varius, Vergilius, and Quintilius.[27] The fact that Vergil's name appears in this and other fragments of Philodemus' work is often invoked to suggest that Vergil was the philosopher's student or patron, though it is sufficient for the present moment simply to note that a personal relationship must have existed. One implication of such a personal relationship is the possibility that Vergil had first-hand familiarity with Philodemus' literary theory, whether with the philosopher's own thoughts on genre or with the perspectives of the various other theorists he presents (and, typically, refutes) in *On Poems*. From here, it is easy to hypothesize how these theories would have been disseminated more widely among the poets who would leave their marks (and names) on Augustan literature. Vergil, Plotius (Tucca), Varius (Rufus), and Quintilius (Varus) might have not only informed their own poetic productions with Philodemean theories but also shared the understanding of literary theory they acquired from Philodemus with other poets and friends—friends like Horace. After all, three of these writers (along with Maecenas) are named in *Satires* 1.10.81 (*Plotius et Varius, Maecenas Vergiliusque*) as figures whose opinions Horace respects when it comes to his poetry, and the name Quintilius appears in Horace's *Ars Poetica* as well.[28] Horace also implies a familiarity with Philodemus' poems at *Satires* 1.2.120-122. Thus, even if Horace had no personal contact with the philosopher, several authors whom he claims as friends seem to have known Philodemus well enough to warrant a "shout out" in his literature. Consequently, there is reason to believe that both Vergil and Horace would have been familiar

26 Armstrong, Fish, Johnston, and Skinner (2003). See particularly Armstrong's "Introduction."

27 Gigante and Capasso (1989) conclude their article assertively: "In conclusione, ci è toccato il síngolare destino di leggere la prima testimonianza del nome di Virgilio in lingua greca e di confermare la sua presenza nel circolo filodemeo di Ercolano" (6).

28 In a note to his translation of *Ars Poetica* 438, Rudd (1997) identifies the Quintilius mentioned as "Quintilius Varus of Cremona, the friend of Horace and Virgil" (195). A Quintilius who is particularly dear to Vergil appears in *Odes* I.24.

with aspects of Philodemus' literary theory, as would have the many Augustan poets influenced by Vergil's and Horace's poems.

Of additional relevance to how the Augustan poets may have thought about genre are those poetic works composed in the years of the late Roman Republic. Suppose that Philodemus never spoke to Vergil about poetry—that, however unbelievable the prospect in the case of two poets, the two men talked about anything *but* poetry,[29] and so Vergil had nothing of Philodemus' genre theory to impart to Horace, and Horace nothing to share with Ovid—the years of the late Republic nevertheless produced literary works with which Vergil and Horace were familiar and from which they and Ovid would have gleaned information that contributed to their own personal theories of genre. Identifying the particular marks of an Epicurean thinker whose work only survives in fragments is difficult, but identifying allusions to extant literature with rich manuscript traditions is slightly easier (or has simply been done more earnestly and successfully by centuries of literary scholars). Unfortunately we are still limited in our consideration by the paucity of complete poetic texts surviving from the time period; the scattered fragments of various neoteric poets are little more help than the fragmentary papyri of Philodemus. Nevertheless, a lengthy book—or, more accurately, a lengthy collection—offers itself as a case worthy of consideration, precisely for the reason that its echoes are easily heard in the poetry of the Augustan era.[30] The *Liber Catulli*, vexed as it is by the issue of dating its composition and compilation, reflects the efforts of deliberate organization based upon metrical and thematic differences between poems, and even if the arrangement of the poems is the work of a later editor, the editor operated in an intellectual environment attuned to meter.[31] Of course, it is

29 I find this all the more unlikely in light of Gigante's and Capasso's (1989) suggestion that the work in which Vergil's name appears is *On Flattery*: "dell'adulazione" (5). The Roman poet must have spoken to his mentor about poetry and may have even played the role of the flatterer.

30 Fordyce (1961) xxii-xxiv succinctly summarizes some of the best textual evidence of Vergil's and Horace's familiarity with Catullus.

31 Conte (1994b) 143 says of the ordering of the poems that "the majority tend to believe, rightly, that this ordering

tempting to overstate the case: the polymetric poems in the collection are precisely that—poems in many meters. Catullus himself refers to his *iambi* in c. 36, c. 40, and c. 54 in such a way that the term must indicate a thematic classification of abuse rather than a metrical designation; all three poems are actually composed in hendecasyllables.[32] But *iambi* remains a term that carries metrical associations, and, despite the fact that it is the "incorrect" name for the meter of these poems and, to some scholars, not strictly a metrical term in the first place,[33] Catullus uses a term with long-standing metrical resonances as a means to identify genre.[34]

I have already strayed far beyond the bounds of any conventional "genre of genre theory" by highlighting occasions of genre awareness in Greek and Latin poetic production (like the awareness present throughout the poetry of Callimachus and Catullus) amidst the explicit theories of genre from Classical and Hellenistic Greece. My reason for presenting both implicit and explicit evidence of Classical genre theory is based upon my belief that a line of "genre thinking", however indistinct at points, can be drawn from Plato's comments in the *Republic* to the poetry of Vergil, Horace, and Ovid. Indeed, other than the writings of Plato and Aristotle, who are the primary sources for explicit, extensive, and extant theories of genre in the Classical world, the most explicit, extensive, and extant remarks on genre in the Classical world appear in Augustan poetry itself, and these are examined in the pages to follow. Nevertheless, one risks participating in a gross oversimplification in assuming that the theoretical positions that survive in Plato's and Aristotle's texts were those thinkers' ultimate and unqualified theories, let alone theories to which subsequent thinkers universally and uncritically subscribed. Some fragments of

---

[. . .] is rather the work of others, carried out after the poet's death, when a posthumous edition of his poems was prepared."

32 Though, in the case of c. 42 (*adeste hendecasyllabi, quot estis* in v. 1), the names and the meters correspond.

33 See West (1974) 22 for the argument that "[i]ambic metre got its name from being particularly characteristic of ἴαμβοι, not vice versa."

34 Morgan (2010) 16 asserts that "we readily talk of the genres of 'iambus' and 'elegy', after all, although those are primarily metrical designations."

Philodemus' *On Poetry* confirm that Aristotle composed works of literary theory in which he supplemented (and may have even changed) the positions he sets out in his *Poetics*. Many more fragments of Philodemus attest that Plato's and Aristotle's theories were refined and contradicted outright by later theorists. And throughout all of this theorizing, refining, and contradicting by those interpreting poetry, poets themselves remained attuned to generic differences and continued to compose poetry in numerous formally distinct and (in the case of *iambi* and *hendecasyllabi*) not-so-distinct genres. But a poem's formal attributes and, in particular, its meter remain crucial components of genre theory and genre awareness throughout the poetry of Vergil, Horace, and Ovid.

The Puzzle of Genre: Multigeneric Meters and a Call to Laughter

In his book *Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace*, Stephen Harrison defines a literary genre as "a form which can be identified through a particular generic repertoire of external and internal features."[35] He lays out a formal repertoire (title, meter, linguistic register, length and structure, rhetorical framework, and narrative voice), a thematic repertoire (general theme, plot conventions, tone, and narrativity), and a collection of what he calls explicit "metageneric signals" (authorially claimed generic exemplars in the name of individual *auctores*, programmatic openings, and symbolic metonyms).[36] I find Harrison's definition of genre satisfying, not only for its comprehensiveness but also for its flexibility. There is, nevertheless, something artificial in the last of his divisions—those features of a poem he designates "metageneric signals." Are these truly distinct from the formal and thematic repertory of a poem? Is, for example, the naming of a poetic *auctor* any more of a "metageneric signal" than the poem's length or tone?

35 Harrison (2007) 11.
36 Harrison (2007) 22-33.

Harrison's "meta" term (i.e., "metageneric signals") corresponds with my use of the term "metacommunication" throughout the previous two chapters, but metacommunication casts a wider net. Unless a poem somehow identifies its own genre in an absolute and unambiguous manner, each feature, external and internal, carries a metacommunicative charge that contributes to the generic identity of the poem. In other words, barring a conclusive generic determinant (whatever that may look like), a poem's genre is an amalgamation of all of its various cues. The concept of metacommunication encompasses the formal and thematic features of a poem just as comprehensively as it encompasses the "signals" of genre identified by Harrison. The result is something of a leveling of the formal and thematic features of a poetic work as generic indicators. Every feature of a poem, external (formal) and internal (thematic) alike, is a form of metacommunication that collectively participates in the construction of a poem's genre.

Once you strip away all of the external and internal metacommunicative cues—length, tone, programmatic passages, etc.—does a generic "identification tag" remain? Probably not. But might specific cues be stronger than others? I believe so. As discussed in the previous section, meter and genre are closely linked in ancient literature. In Aristotle's *Poetics* (1447b13-17, quoted above), the author declares that poets may be identified by the meters in which they write (e.g., "epic poets"). To exercise a conservative reading of this passage, meter would be lending its name *through the poet* to the genre of the poet's production. A poem in elegiac couplets is identified as being written by an elegiac poet, and so the genre of this poet's work takes the name "elegy." Of course, the middleman of the poet is unnecessary and potentially complicating. What if a poet writes in a variety of meters? If one simply understands that a poem's meter determines its genre, the poet's metrical title becomes a corresponding result of genre differentiation rather than the intermediate cause. In other words, a poem in epic hexameter is an "epic"—as simple as that. The epic poet is identified as such simply because he composed this poem. Such a direct

link is particularly clear with respect to the "big" genres of epic, elegy, and iambic, where the names of the genres and meters are the same.

Horace himself remarks upon connections between epic, elegy, iambic, and their respective meters in *Ars Poetica* vv. 73-88:

> *res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella*
> *quo scribi possent numero, monstrauit Homerus.*
> *versibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum,*
> *post etiam inclusa est uoti sententia compos;*
> *quis tamen exiguos elegos emiserit auctor,*
> *grammatici certant et adhuc sub iudice lis est.*
> *Archilochum proprio rabies armauit iambo;*
> *hunc socci cepere pedem grandesque coturni,*
> *alternis aptum sermonibus et populares*
> *uincentem strepitus et natum rebus agendis.*
> *Musa dedit fidibus diuos puerosque deorum*
> *et pugilem uictorem et equum certamine primum*
> *et iuuenum curas et libera uina referre.*
> *descriptas seruare uices operumque colores*
> *cur ego, si nequeo ignoroque, poeta salutor?*
> *cur nescire pudens praue quam discere malo?*
>
> The accomplishments of kings and leaders and sorrowful wars—
> in what meter they can be written, Homer has shown.
> In verses unequally paired laments were first enclosed,
> then, also, the sentiment of a discharged vow;
> Still, as to who the founder was who published short elegies,
> the grammarians dispute, and to this day the jury is out.
> Madness equipped Archilochus with the characteristic iamb;
> slippers and lofty buskins took hold of this foot,
> suited to conversational exchanges, overcoming
> the popular din, and natural for moving matters along.
> The muse granted to strings to speak of the gods, the boys of gods,
> the victorious boxer, the first horse in the race,
> and the concerns of young men and flowing wine.
> Why am I, if I am incompetent and neglect to preserve
> the established turns and colors of works, greeted as a poet?
> Why do I, perversely modest, prefer ignorance to learning?

The correspondence between meter and content becomes apparent with the phrase *quo scribi possent numero* in v. 74, though Horace does not prescribe a link between hexameter and "the feats of kings and leaders"; the verb *possent* only remarks upon the ability of hexameter to

accommodate epic content, a point to which I return in the following section.[37] Horace proceeds in the next verse to address the physical appearance of an elegiac couplet on the page (*versibus impariter iunctis* in v. 75)—a description that hinges on the metrical form of the genre: elegiac couplets are unequal because the second line of a couplet has five rather than six feet.[38] In v. 77, the genre *qua* meter is explicitly identified as *elegi*, and, if elegies are understood to be more compact and shorter than epic, an additional reference to formal qualities of the genre may be operative in the adjective *exiguos*. Again, as with epic, no connection is prescribed between the form and its subject matter, but *querimonia* (v. 75) and *sententia* (v. 76) appear matter-of-factly as the first two subjects "contained" (*inclusa est*, v. 76) by elegy. The next genre to attract Horace's attention is iambic poetry, and he uses the name of the meter at the end of v. 79 and makes use of the metrically loaded term *pedem* in v. 80. The connection between iambic meter and a particular poetic content here takes on a stronger prescriptivist valence (*proprio* in v. 79). Following the verses about iambic poetry's characteristics, Horace lists the material of lyric poetry before closing off the section with the question he poses in vv. 86-87. He implies that these genres—the ones described (*descriptas*) in the previous verses—are, in some sense, the untouchable and the canonical ones. A poet is not a poet unless he learns them and respects them.

Horace's verses demonstrate that certain topics correspond to certain meters . . . but only three out of four times. The relationship between genres and their namesake meters is at its most straightforward with epic, elegy, and iambic, yet the verses dedicated to lyric poetry (vv. 83-85) show where this relationship breaks down. Lyric is illustrated not by meter but by a performative or situational feature: the poetry is accompanied by strings (*fidibus*, v. 83), a natural enough metonymy for the *lyra* itself. Metrical terms are altogether absent, and no formal elements of

37 Rudd (1989) 163 reads the phrase restrictedly: "[T]his does not, of course, imply that there were other possibilities; the hexameter was the right metre for the purpose."
38 See the discussion of Ovid's *Amores* 1.1 in Chapter 6.

lyric poetry are mentioned. Horace's decision not to mention meter can hardly be a comment on meter's (lack of) relevance in lyric poetry. Perhaps, however, meter's variability can account for its absence here. Because the genre encompasses more than one meter, it offers noteworthy evidence of the impossibility of always drawing a direct link between meter and genre.[39] The subject matter and the mention of strings are nevertheless sufficient to delineate the genre.

Despite the preceding focus on references to meter and content in this short passage of the *Ars Poetica*, these are just two pieces of the puzzle in Horace's descriptions of the various genres. The sleight of hand performed by Horace in these verses lies in his repeated presentation of simple, seemingly smooth and comprehensive portraits of genres, that, upon closer inspection, reveal themselves to be composites of numerous other puzzle pieces. The four genres in this passage are described by a multiplicity of features including content, meter, length, tone, performative context, and the names of key poets in the genre. Homer and Archilochus are named as figure-heads for their respective genres, and their names would have been (and still are) immediately associated with epic and iambic. Indeed, the identification of vv. 73-74 as referring to epic is arguably only confirmed with the appearance of Homer's name. Poetic "spokespeople" are important enough to mention even when unknown, as Horace self-consciously draws attention to the general scholarly inability to settle upon a comparable *auctor* for elegy. And the patron of lyric is none other than the musical *Musa* herself.

Additional features do not fit neatly into any single formal or thematic classification but lend color and texture to the descriptions. For example, Horace's attention to how elegy's original focus shifted over time (*primum* / *post* in vv. 75-76) may serve as an oblique reference to the form's couplet construction wherein the hexameter line is first (*primum*) and the pentameter line follows (*post*). Or it may call attention to the fact that the content of elegy continued to shift after

39 See Morgan (2010) 22 for a more general consideration of this breakdown.

this first thematic shift, and that it looked very different in his own day—when amatory elegy was quite popular.[40] Even Horace's compact description in vv. 81-82 of how the iambic foot befits spoken exchanges, overcomes the noise of the crowd, and naturally moves content forward conveys details about the genre's register, performance, style, and momentum. The features that construct each genre's identity in these verses of the *Ars Poetica* are sometimes glaringly obvious —"eponymous" in the case of meter's connection to epic, elegy, and iambic—and, at other times, as with lyric, metrically undetermined.

Meter is a form of metacommunication alongside all of the other features of a poem,[41] and the attention I have dedicated to the subject in the preceding pages will have already betrayed my belief that meter has a special metacommunicative charge in the poetry of Augustan Rome, and a particular relevance to the poems and genres I explore in this chapter. If we return to the image of genre as a jigsaw puzzle in which every feature of a poem is a piece, meter would undoubtedly be one of the largest or most distinct pieces—a piece that invites the puzzler to place it first, to make the other pieces fit around it, and to predict what the final image on the puzzle will look like when all the pieces are made to fit together. The "meter piece" would likely have unique tabs and blanks so that, even within the completed puzzle, it would draw the eye.[42] So visible is meter within a poem that, upon first reading, a poem's meter is one of its earliest identifiable features, presenting itself to the reader or listener as early as the first verse[43] and long before most other features (e.g., length, theme, plot, and potential *auctores*) are established with certainty. Horace's own description of elegy in *A.P.* 75-6 presents lines of alternating length as a

40 The verses on elegy lack any mention of the amatory verse that proliferated in the years surrounding the publication of Horace's *Ars Poetica*. In *A.P.* 401-403, elegy is associated with martial poetry by way of the elegist Tyrtaeus.

41 Amy Richlin's use of "metacommunication" in *The Garden of Priapus* (by which I first came into contact with the term) refers to meter's potential to communicate information about a poem's expected content. See p. 65 n. 4.

42 Some jigsaw puzzles contain pieces (sometimes called "whimsy pieces") that resemble a specific animal or object, like a cat or a lighthouse.

43 Elegiac couplets delay metrical identification until the middle of the second line. Strophic verse forms (such as the Sapphic stanza) might delay metric identification until the third or fourth verse.

distinguishing feature of the form, as if the appearance of the poetic text on the page might be recognizable to a reader before any specific word is read.[44]

What happens when one takes the metrical puzzle piece from, say, Homer's *Iliad* and plunks this "*epos* piece" down in a different puzzle? Or one realizes that certain pieces, when rotated or even inverted, can be cut to fit around the "pentameter piece" from Tyrtaeus' poems? The remainder of this chapter treats poems that result from such mixing and rearrangement—poems composed in "multigeneric meters" that lend their rhythms to more than one genre. The designation implies a divorcing of meter from genre, but the preceding pages offer ample evidence of the impossibility of any complete separation of the two, even on the level of nomenclature. A meter's earliest generic correspondence is typically preserved in the metrical/generic name used by ancient and modern critics, as the preceding discussion of epic, elegiac, and iambic in Horace's *Ars Poetica* demonstrates. Thus a multigeneric meter has a primary metrical association that, to judge from Horace's *Ars Poetica*, is dictated by historical primacy. When I take hold of the metrical piece from Homer's *Iliad*, I am grasping the "*epos* piece", even if the same piece (perhaps with minor adjustments) appears in subsequent genres and poems.[45] Likewise, the "elegiac piece" is the metrical piece that I pull from the poetry of Tyrtaeus and Mimnermus.

I regard both the epic hexameter and the elegiac couplet as multigeneric meters. Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles* and Vergil's *Eclogues* use a metrical puzzle piece that looks all but identical to Homer's, but these are not works of "epic" in the eyes of ancient or modern theorists. Ovid's *Amores* are composed in elegiac distichs that are, for the most part, the same as those used by

44 A poem's title, should it have one, is one of few likely sources for earlier information about a specific poem.

45 Although the "*epos* piece" can be identified with different names—the "dactylic hexameter piece" or the "Homeric piece"—the primary association remains with epic (e.g., Aristotle acknowledges the custom of referring to those who compose in hexametric meter, regardless of the content, as "epic poets" at *Poetics* 1447b13-17).

every elegiac poet before him (if perhaps more formally refined), but, beside this metrical similarity, the *Amores* bear little additional resemblance to early elegiac poetry. Indeed, according to Horace's *Ars Poetica*, there is no reason for readers to associate the elegiac form with amatory poetry, and there is even one oblique reason not to. In vv. 75-76 and 401-403, when he lists multiple genres for which elegy is well suited, Horace alludes to funerary epigram, votive inscriptions, and martial poetry as the material of elegiac verse. Lest any reader accuse him of forgetting to mention love poetry, he includes the (presumably amorous) "concerns of young men" (*iuuenum curas*, v. 85), but he does so among the thematic fodder for lyric poetry.

I further elucidate Horace's, Vergil's, and Ovid's use of multigeneric meters in my examination of laughter's role in these authors' *corpora* later in this chapter, but I now wish to speculate more generally about what effect is achieved through a poet's use of an established meter in a context other than the preeminent (or "primary") one. Having identified both epic and elegy as multigeneric meters, how is a poem altered when these meters are used in genres other than their original ones? I do not want to consider the creation of new genres. Such an inquiry, however interesting, would take me further afield of my interest in the role of laughter in Augustan poetry than this consideration of meter already has. In any case, Horace, Vergil, and Ovid all operate within established poetic traditions that subscribe to specific metrical and generic conventions. But these poetic traditions—satire, pastoral, and love elegy—make use of meters that have strong, historically-antecedent ties to other genres.

To use Horace's hexameter poetry as an example, Horace's appropriates the "*epos* piece" for his generically-puzzling *Satires* and *Epistles*, just as his self-proclaimed predecessor Lucilius has done. But Horace's use of hexamater recommends itself for consideration for the reason that Horace, in writing a poem about poetic theory and convention in the *Ars Poetica*, draws attention to his own metrical unconventionality. I noted previously Horace's remarks in *A.P.* 73-74 on

Homeric hexameter's ability to treat specific themes:

> *res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella*
> *quo scribi possent numero, monstrauit Homerus.*
>
> The accomplishments of kings and leaders and sorrowful wars—
> in what meter they can be written, Homer has shown.

Horace is cautious not to prescribe a link between hexameter and "the feats of kings and leaders." To say that epic themes *can* be accommodated by hexameter is far from saying that epic themes *must* be treated in hexameter, let alone the reverse—that hexameter must be used for treating epic themes. The verb *possent* allows Horace to grant hexameter a wider application, with a caution that is, in some sense, obligatory for being conveyed in the hexametric meter under discussion. The *Ars Poetica*, construed as one of Horace's epistles, is not an epic. It is not about the feats of kings and leaders, even if one asserts sophistically that the verses in which Horace mentions these topics are epic in theme.[46] Horace foregrounds the prevailing association of epic themes and epic hexameter in writing that epic themes are able to be written about in hexameter, but he leaves the door wide open for satire, pastoral, didactic, and other genres to build poems around the "*epos* piece."

Horace, as he draws attention to his ongoing playfulness with metrical tradition, seems perpetually aware of the puzzle he constructs with these verses and, indeed, with all of his hexametric verses. He himself borrows a distinguishing metrical piece from Homer's puzzles and he surrounds it with new pieces that fit the tabs and blanks but bear different, jarring images on the printed side. He juxtaposes the golds and silvers of epic with the browns of satire and the red markings of literary criticism.

A reader who encounters this juxtaposition for the first time, or, as in the case of *A.P.* vv.

46 Admittedly, Horace seems to be comfortable contradicting himself elsewhere in his hexameter poems. In *Ep.* 2.1.111 and *A.P.* 305, he ironically remarks (in writing) that he writes nothing at all.

73-74, is reminded of it in the midst of a poem, may be struck by the incongruity. She sees how the "*epos* piece" looks strange when surrounded by the "autobiographical piece", the "low-brow diction piece", or the "poetically self-denying piece." And perhaps, when she realizes how all of these pieces align and misalign at the same time, how they fit perfectly in their not-fitting, how, in a way, they even resemble the chimerical image with which Horace opens the *Ars Poetica*, perhaps she laughs.

CHAPTER 4: SURROUNDED BY LAUGHTER IN SATIRE

HORACE'S *SATIRES* 1

The concept of a jigsaw puzzle may offer a particularly apt analogy for the generic mishmash of Roman verse satire. It is as if Horace has dumped the pieces from his entire, impressive literary collection (comprising others' poems along with his own) onto one table, and he has realized that the assortment—what Juvenal later refers to as a *farrago*[1]—can be reassembled to yield a new image that distinguishes itself not *despite* but *by virtue of* its variability.

Horace makes no claims of doing anything innovative, let alone poetic. In *Satires* 1.4.56-62, the satirist aligns his project with Lucilius' and then asserts that the words within his poems —the pieces in his puzzle—hardly bear the markings of a poetic creation:

> *his, ego quae nunc,*
> *olim quae scripsit Lucilius, eripias si*
> *tempora certa modosque, et quod prius ordine uerbum est*
> *posterius facias praeponens ultima primis,*
> *non, ut si soluas 'postquam Discordia taetra*
> *belli ferratos postis portasque refregit,'*
> *inuenias etiam disiecti membra poetae.*
>
> From these things which I now write,
> which Lucilius once wrote, if you should remove
> the set timing and meter, and the word before in order
> you should produce later, placing the final words before the first,
> you would not—as if you unwound "After foul Discord
> broke apart the iron-wrought posts and gates of war"—
> discover still the limbs of a dismembered poet.

The irony of the passage has not gone undetected.[2] Horace offers a poetic *tour-de-force* of ellipsis, hysteron-proteron, and suspended syntax in the very lines in which he disavows any credentials as a poet. By his accounting, his verse is the product of a mere metrical reshuffling of

1 Juv. 1.86.
2 Oliensis (1998) 23-24. Gowers (2012) 167 identifies Horace's claims in these lines as "disingenuous."

words that could otherwise be plucked from their current places and reordered with minimal effort.[3] The lines themselves might just as well be the remains of fragmented, colloquial thought, far from the deliberate composition of an expert versifier. The Ennian passage that the satirist quotes for contrast in vv. 60-61 carries an implicit poetic "heft" from its martial content (*belli* in v. 61), from its emphasis on personified discord and fractured transgression (*Discordia* in v. 60 and *refregit* in v. 61), and even from the weight that comes with mentioning an adjective for a heavy metal (*ferratos* in v. 61). Horace distances himself from such weight and heft in his role as satirist.[4] He is just chatting, passing the time, and reassembling pieces of everyday speech. Puzzle creation might be the poetic act, and puzzle solving might be the interpretive act. Perhaps puzzle mixing is the satirical act.

The question of genre in Roman verse satire hardly permits a simple summary. When G. L. Hendrickson in his 1927 article *Satura Tota Nostra Est* offers an explanation of the oft-quoted phrase in Quintilian from which he draws his title, he takes pains to divorce the Latin word *satura* from the glut of modern associations that the English "satire" carries. As he responds to other scholars and elucidates divergent Latin and Greek etymologies of satire, he also demonstrates that satire's generic classification is already a matter of debate in the English-speaking world. His conclusion: "[Quintilian] means that the special type of literature created by Lucilius, dominated by a certain spirit, clothed in a certain metrical form, fixed by the usage of a series of canonical writers, and finally designated by a name specifically Latin, is Roman and not Greek."[5] Thus Hendrickson offers a less systematic but similarly comprehensive version of Harrison's definition of genre, complete with formal ("clothed in a certain metrical form"), thematic ("dominated by a certain spirit"), and metageneric elements ("created by Lucilius" and

3 Note that Horace focuses on meter first.
4 The passage reads as a variation on a *recusatio*. I treat *recusationes* in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.
5 Hendrickson (1927) 58.

"fixed by the usage of a series of canonical writers"). The unique component of Hendrickson's definition (*via* Quintilian), when these various metacommunicative features are accounted for, is a "special type of literature [. . .] finally designated by a name specifically Latin." But this core identity of satire is not claimed by Horace for his own work; the term *satura* is altogether absent from Horace's first book of *Satires* and does not appear in Horace until the first line of his second book of *Satires*.[6]

When we allow the verse satirists to speak for themselves, the metageneric *auctor* Lucilius, whom Horace invokes in *Satires* 1.4.57 (quoted previously), binds the genre together more explicitly than any other specific Latin name.[7] The Horatian *persona* identifies Lucilius as an on-again, off-again model in *Satires* 1.4, as well as in 1.10 and 2.1. At the end of his first book of *Satires*, he even credits Lucilius as the *inuentor* (1.10.48) of the mode in which he writes. The speaker in Persius' first satire situates himself as the recipient of a tradition when he cites both Lucilius (1.114) and Horace (*Flaccus* in 1.116) as predecessors to his own literary creations.[8] Juvenal, the last of the canonical Roman verse satirists, refers explicitly to "fiery Lucilius" (*Lucilius ardens*) at the end of his first poem (1.165), referring earlier—but only obliquely in 1.20—to the native of Aurunca (*Auruncae . . . alumnus*). While Juvenal does not identify explicitly with the intermediary figures in the satiric tradition, his description of Lucilius draws

6 Of the absence of *satura* as a term in Horace's first book, Wheeler (1912) states, "The inevitable conclusion is not that *satura* is missing from Horace *Satt*. i. 4 and 10 because it was not yet an accepted term, but that both its absence and Horace's vague and periphrastic terminology are merely part of the usual poetic manner of the Romans and that no inference can be drawn from this manner as to the date at which *satura* became an accepted term" (467). Van Rooy (1965) 64-65 argues, "While it is true that 'sermo' in Lucilius referred to an informal, discursive way of writing, it probably did not carry the same sort of stigma as the word 'satura' (cf. our 'medley' or 'hotch-potch'). Certainly, Horace selected *Sermones* as title—though he made the poem, and not the book, the unit—because despite Lucilius' lower artistic standards in regard to form, there was no essential difference between their theories of the general style appropriate to the writing of satire [. . .]." He concludes that, "*Sermones* was not a meaningless substitute for *Saturae* as title of Horace's satires" (65). Williams (1972) 15 avers that the title *sermones*, rather than *saturae*, "best reflects the conversation style and structure" of the satires.

7 Rosenmeyer (2006) 435 states that writing in the tradition of a metageneric *auctor* is not genre criticism but "model criticism."

8 In his reference to *Flaccus*, Persius describes Horace with language (*excusso naso* in 1.118) similar to that Horace uses to describe Lucilius (*emunctae naris* in 1.4.8).

on imagery familiar to readers from Horace (*Satires* 2.1.39-41).[9] A younger sibling in the verse satire family who is self-conscious about the undeniable success of his older brothers, Juvenal places himself alongside Horace and Persius as Lucilius' literary progeny without mentioning either of his "brothers" by name.

The identification of a shared ancestor would seem crucial to establishing literary *genus*, as would the identification of other members of the literary family tree.[10] When Horace claims Lucilius as his stylistic model and Persius makes mention of both Lucilius and Horace as predecessors, the boundaries delineating the genre become increasingly distinct. Lucilius may be the creator of a new form of poetry, but his successors, in emulating internal and external features of his poetry, actually confirm the genre's defining characteristics and thus renew and recreate it. In other words, the claims of generic offspring, rather than simply identifying a predetermined genre, confirm it and continue to shape it.[11] The importance of Horace's position as "first successor" in the order of canonical heirs to Lucilius cannot be overstressed, though we should also be aware of the extent to which this positioning is accomplished by Horace himself. By incorporating certain Lucilian precedents and leaving out others, Horace's *Satires* establish the genre as a plurality of texts and a poetic tradition rather than the one-off creation of its founder.

The arguments that follow do not treat Roman verse satire as a whole but Horatian satire in particular, and I focus on Horace's first book of *Satires*. My reasons for restricting my scope in

9 Both passages articulate a satirical style. Horace prefers to keep his sword sheathed (*ensis* / *uagina tectus)*, but Juvenal's verses depict Lucilius roaring with a "drawn sword" (*ense* . . . *stricto*). For a fuller discussion, see Connors (2005) 129-130.

10 Cf. the elegiac lineage that Ovid traces from Gallus through Propertius and Tibullus to himself in *Tristia* 4.10.51-54:

Vergilium uidi tantum, nec auara Tibullo
tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae.
successor fuit hic tibi, Galle, Propertius illi;
quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui.

11 For a variation on this thought, see Bakhtin (1994) 188: "Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre."

this way are practical as well as theoretical. A treatment of laughter in all of Horace's hexameter poems could warrant a separate, dedicated study, primarily because of the size of the respective *corpora* of the *Epistles* and *Satires* but also because of the high frequency with which laughter occurs in these poems. From a theoretical standpoint, the *Liber Sermonum* offers an appealing entry point into a discussion of genre in Augustan poetry, because of its status as an early instantiation of the Augustan poetic book,[12] because it is the first book and thus a sort of "boundary marker" in what becomes a two-book collection,[13] and because of the dialogue between himself and his generic forebears that Horace creates throughout it. However indebted to Lucilius and other predecessors the satirist at times claims to be, he also takes pains to distance himself from these figures. He simultaneously constructs and deconstructs the first book of *Satires* as a generically self-conscious text—an outright declaration of a new genre that frequently disavows its own newness. In the remainder of this chapter, I explore how Horace frequently and meaningfully employs laughter as a part of this declaration. He casts laughter as a critical component of his satiric program and a feature of satire that is explicitly and implicitly revisited throughout the book.

For those seeking an overview of Horatian satire, the temptation is to rush to the fourth and tenth poems in the first book of *Satires* wherein the speaker declares his influences and motivations in what have come to be identified as "programmatic passages." To succumb to this temptation seems, on the one hand, to precipitate a fragmentation of the book. To resist it is to fail to acknowledge a fragmentation that, in the eyes of many readers, plainly exists. The dilemma seems fitting in such a puzzling genre.

12 The dating of the publication of the first book of *Satires* is often placed early enough—Du Quesnay (1984) dates it to the winter of 36/35 BCE—that the book might be more accurately designated a product of Triumviral or Octavian Rome, but I believe the social and political climate that contextualized Horace's *Liber Sermonum* (and the nearly contemporary *Eclogues*) clearly reflects the influence of the future Roman emperor.

13 Cf. the discussion of Book 1 of Ovid's *Amores* as a generic boundary in Chapter 6

Fragmentation occurs when the first three poems of the work are interpreted as little more than a prelude to the remainder of the book. Even those scholars who urge and model a more patient, holistic approach to the *Liber Sermonum* tend to gesture toward the "diatribe satires" before sitting down with the satiric *persona* in the fourth satire to listen to the real story.[14] Yet any belief that the "real story" appears in these particular passages implies that *other* stories appear elsewhere, whether as incidental distractions or deliberate red herrings. On the other hand, programs are typically treated as discrete portions of a given text. Unless a program somehow accommodates a distinction between its declaration (i.e., the programmatic passage itself) and its enactment (i.e., the program "in action" in the rest of the work), fragmentation becomes a necessary byproduct of a poetic program.[15] Poetic programs, however, are never so detailed, nor do readers expect them to be exhaustive any more than a conference attendee expects to read in her physical program of a specific time set aside for reading the program.

The text of the *Satires* contains lengthy passages that are, by common consensus, programmatic, a fragmentation that for most critics exists plainly in Horace's book.[16] The passages offer moments of poetic self-reflection in which the speaker *qua "*poet" (or, as Horace claims at 1.4.40-42, "scarcely-a-poet") writes of his own project of composition and poetic creation—literary variations on the theatrical concept of "breaking the fourth wall".[17] As the

14 Zetzel (1980), Freudenburg (1993), and Gowers (2012) all do this to varying degrees.

15 In other words, if the poetry declares its intentions on set occasions, there remain other occasions when the poetry may enact (or fail to enact) those intentions, but does not continue declaring them. Another problem arises at the intersection of "program" and "genre." If a program is a generic prerequisite, the program of a text in some sense extends beyond the text itself.

16 A more obvious fragmentation is also evident within the *Satires*. The first book of *Satires* contains ten poems. The eager reader, in rushing to the fourth poem, does not simply skim over a "first section" of "diatribe satires" but over three discrete compositions. There is no reason to believe that Horace's poetic book is internally divided by any exigencies of the physical book, such as the length of a papyrus scroll (although the length of the complete book may have been influenced by such concerns). The reader reasonably assumes that a deliberate poetic sensibility dictates both the unity of a given poem and the divisions between poems. Whether one prefers a title of *Sermones* or *Saturae* for Horace's first book of *Satires*, one acknowledges the plurality of the poetic composition with either title. Van Rooy (1965) states that for Horace, "The unit 'satura' was not the book, but the poem, each written in continuous metrical form [. . .]" (61), and compares Horace's conception of the word to that of Lucilius, for whom *satura* refers to the collective poems—the book.

17 Neither *poeta* nor *poema* occurs in the first book of *Satires* outside of 1.4 and 1.10.

focus of the poetry shifts from outward to inward and the poetry becomes its own subject, Horace creates self-consciously metapoetic moments. Writing about writing. Poetry about poetry.

The identification of these passages as accurate declarations of an overarching poetic program nevertheless requires an *a posteriori* perspective on the text and an act of interpretation that draws upon the work in its entirety, similar to an unmarked thesis sentence that only reveals itself upon rereading.[18] An additional challenge involving poetic programs is that not all poems or poetic books contain programmatic passages. Thus the very articulation of a poetic program, independent of the program's stated content, constitutes its own piece in the particular puzzle of a poem's genre.[19]

The previous pages present a sampling of the ample evidence that the identification of genre in general, and in satire, more particularly, is hardly a straightforward endeavor. Unfortunately, programmatic passages do not offer a direct or uncontroversial route to establishing genre identity. The act of delineating genre based upon a program runs the risk of circularity, especially if a program is identified in hindsight (as it often is), when the work has been read, the interpretive act completed, and the puzzle assembled. To some extent, I defer to scholarly consensus regarding the conventional programmatic passages and poems of Horace's *Liber Sermonum*, but, to draw upon the puzzle analogy from the previous discussion of meter and genre, I tease apart these programmatic passages into their constituent pieces and consider what holds them together. In this way, I avoid wiping the table clean and beginning the puzzle of Horatian satire with no pieces on my interpretive surface.

It would be foolish to attempt to deconstruct and rearrange the puzzle of Horatian satire in any comprehensive sense. Too many insightful interpretations of the *Satires* have been

18 Hubbard (1981) remarks that, "Any part of a satire of Horace can be fully understood only once the poem has been read in its entirety" (320).

19 A further complication in the interpretation of Horace's *Satires* is that the idea of a poetic program assigns to the text a deliberateness that Horace's satirical persona disavows (e.g., *Satires* 1.4.41-42).

developed in the past century, and many puzzles have been admirably solved.[20] In drawing attention to laughter as an indispensable piece—a corner or even a bounding edge—in the poetic puzzles Horace creates throughout the *Satires*, I stress how laughter contributes an essential and destabilizing force to these poems. In the following three sections I focus on three ways in which laughter corresponds with and highlights other key features of the genre, including 1) Horace's identification as a pseudo-poet who composes informal, second-person, conversational musings (the *sermo*) in *Satires* 1.1; 2) Horace's use of *apologiae* as a means to programmatic self-fashioning in *Satires* 1.4 and 1.10; and 3) Horace's cautious use of laughter within the narratives of *Satires* 1.7 and 1.5.

Section I: Laughter and Conversation in *Satires* 1.1.23-27

It would take little time to point out that terms for laughter and the risible are operative in the widely accepted programmatic sections in *Satires* 4 and 10. I examine these poems briefly in the following pages, but I prefer to begin with the beginning of book—with the initial pieces offered to first-time readers of the *Satires*. Terms for laughter and the risible, occurring early in the first poem, are among these pieces.[21]

When Horace[22] casually addresses Maecenas in vv. 1-27 of Satires 1.1, he rapidly oscillates between topics and perspectives at the point in a new text when a reader might expect an agenda to be laid out:

> *Qui fit, Maecenas, ut nemo, quam sibi sortem*
> *seu ratio dederit seu fors obiecerit, illa*
> *contentus uiuat, laudet diuersa sequentes?*
> *'o fortunati mercatores' grauis annis*

20 Particularly influential contributions to my readings of the *Satires* are Rudd (1966), Zetzel (1980), Freudenburg (1993), and Gowers (2012).

21 Though not as early as a reading of Freudenburg's explication of the verses would suggest. Freudenburg uses the words "laughable" and "laugh" three times in his analysis of vv. 1-12 of *Serm*. 1.1.

22 Henceforth referred to, for the sake of simplicity and with all the requisite disclaimers regarding authorial identity, as Horace and "the satirist" interchangeably.

miles ait, multo iam fractus membra labore;
contra mercator nauim iactantibus Austris:
'militia est potior. quid enim? concurritur: horae
momento cita mors uenit aut uictoria laeta.'
agricolam laudat iuris legumque peritus,
sub galli cantum consultor ubi ostia pulsat;
ille, datis uadibus qui rure extractus in urbem est,
solos felicis uiuentis clamat in urbe.
cetera de genere hoc—adeo sunt multa—loquacem
delassare ualent Fabium. ne te morer, audi,
quo rem deducam. si quis deus 'en ego' dicat
'iam faciam quod uoltis: eris tu, qui modo miles,
mercator; tu, consultus modo, rusticus: hinc uos,
uos hinc mutatis discedite partibus. eia,
quid statis?' nolint. atqui licet esse beatis.
quid causae est, merito quin illis Iuppiter ambas
iratus buccas inflet neque se fore posthac
tam facilem dicat, uotis ut praebeat aurem?

How does it happen, Maecenas, that no one, regarding the lot
that either reason has granted or chance has thrown his way, lives
content with it, but praises instead those following other paths?
“O those lucky merchants,” says the soldier heavy with
years, his limbs already shattered by great toil.
But then the merchant, with the winds tossing his ship, says,
“The soldier's life is better. Why? There's a charge;
in a moment's time, swift death comes or joyous victory.
The veteran of the courts praises the farmer whenever
a client bangs on his gates before the singing of the rooster;
but he, who was dragged from country to city for a court hearing,
proclaims that everyone lives happily in the city.
Other things of this sort—there are so many—would be sufficient
to exhaust talkative Fabius. But I don't want to keep you, so listen
to where I'm going with things. If some god should say, “Behold,
I now will do what you want: you who were formerly a soldier
will be a trader; you, once a lawyer, now a rustic. You all,
go your separate ways with your roles exchanged. Quick!
Why are you standing?” They'd refuse, though allowed to be happy.
Is there any reason why Jupiter wouldn't, with good cause, puff up
both cheeks at them and say that, from then on, he would
not be so kind as to offer an ear to their prayers.

The speaker begins with a consideration of the “grass is always greener” mentality—a characteristic identified as *mempsimoiria* (μεμψιμοιρία) in Theophrastus' *Characters* and a

mainstay topic of Cynic diatribe.[23] Though Theophrastus accounts for 29 other possible character types, the Horatian satirist believes that the outlook of the *mempsimoiros* is a universal one (*Qui fit, Maecenas, ut nemo* [. . .] *contentus uiuat* in vv. 1-3). He lists the words and thoughts of disgruntled soldiers, sea merchants, lawyers, and farmers, each one claiming that "the other" has it better. Then Horace abruptly curtails this train of thought and presents a hypothetical situation. Offered the opportunity to trade places with a neighbor, he asserts, no one of these people would take it. Horace proceeds to present to his addressee's ears[24]—and to the reader's eyes—a jumble of words denoting laughter, jokes, and play (*iocularia* and *ridens* in v. 23, *ridentem* in v. 24, and *ludo* in v. 27):

> *praeterea, ne sic ut qui iocularia ridens*
> *percurram: quamquam ridentem dicere uerum*
> *quid uetat? ut pueris olim dant crustula blandi*
> *doctores, elementa uelint ut discere prima:*
> *sed tamen amoto quaeramus seria ludo [. . .].*
>
> Anyway, to avoid rushing through this like some laugher through
> one-liners—although what's to keep a laugher from speaking
> the truth, just as coaxing teachers traditionally give boys
> cookies to make them willing to learn their first lessons?—
> but let us still seek out serious matters, with play set aside [. . .].

The conversational nature of *Satires* 1.1 is enacted by the various anacolutha in the verses, as the speaker gives voice to what seems to be off-the-cuff speech.[25] The scattered organization of his argument gives the impression that he may even be "thinking aloud": first, he claims to be avoiding laughter, but then he steps back to imply (note the rhetorical caution of *quid uetat* in v. 25) that laughter is not an impediment to truthful speech, all before he doubles back again and

23 Thphr. *Char*. 17.1 Ἔστι δὲ ἡ μεμψιμοιρία ἐπιτίμησις παρὰ τὸ προσῆκον τῶν δεδομένων. "*Mempsimoiria* is the undue criticism of one's portion [lit. "of things having been granted"]." The term appears in a fragment of Bion (fr. 16a Kindstrand) that calls for contentment with one's lot—a point Horace himself articulates at *Serm*. 1.1.108-9.

24 Cf. *audi* in v. 14.

25 Palmer's (1954) 74 description of oral dialogue, which I quote in Chapter 1, is an apt description of these verses, which are, to my thinking, the best imitation of oral speech in the *Liber Sermonum*.

explicitly dismisses play and, presumably, any attendant laughter from the serious things he intends to pursue with his addressee (*amoto quaeramus seria ludo* in v. 27).[26] But what are these *seria* "we" are invited to seek out alongside the speaker? Will we examine people's discontentment with their own professions? Their unwillingness to do what they think will make them happy? Their complete ignorance of what brings happiness in the first place? Do we believe that the wandering satirical *persona* even knows the answer to these questions?

A cursory inventory of what the reader is offered in the opening verses of *Satires* 1.1 shows an abundance of puzzle pieces: a speaker, a named addressee, moralizing commentary, the illusion of speech, *nominatim* (yet relatively barbless) criticism, a humorous anecdote, fluctuation between playfulness and seriousness. A reader familiar with the remainder of the poem and the rest of the collection recognizes that these are many of the distinguishing features of Horatian satire.[27] These opening verses of *Satires* 1.1 also show Horace stating and simultaneously enacting a defining feature of his satirical program, namely, the literary fiction of his faux-conversations. Rather than writing about his own writing, he speaks about his own speech and, importantly, peppers this speech with terms for laughing, jokes, and play in a self-conscious display of the incongruity the *Satires* entext.

Before I return to a close reading of this opening passage, a brief summary of the remainder of *Satires* 1.1 is helpful. After all, a first-time reader may reasonably feel adrift after reading the first 27 verses of the poem. In vv. 28-30, most of the cast of characters from the

26 Giangrande (1972) labels this verse "ironic" (9). Note the graphic word order in which play (*ludus*) is cast aside together with its participle (*amoto*) to make room for the pursuit of *seria*. Cf. *Ecl.* 7.17 for the reverse subordination of seriousness to play (also reflected by graphic word order): *posthabui tamen illorum mea seria ludo*. Unlike the Horatian satirist, Meliboeus, the speaker at the beginning of *Ecl*. 7, lists the *seria* that he is postponing. Putnam (1995) suggests that Horace's allusion "alerts his reader to the fact that knowledge of [. . .] Vergilian pastoral poetry [is] crucial for full appreciation of the satiric project on which he is embarking" (313). Zetzel (2002) observes that the "attitude toward *ludus*, at least Vergilian *ludus*, is emblematic of Horace's attitude to the *Eclogues* as a whole" (48).

27 This is Horace's satirical program being stated and simultaneously enacted. He has yet to concede that the satires are written works (a point that he dramatically makes in the very last verse of *Satires* 1.10), but many of the other defining features of the genre are present.

opening lines return. The lawyer has been subbed out for an innkeeper, but the farmer, the trader, and the soldier all reappear.[28] This could prove a source of comfort for the disoriented reader. By reintroducing several figures from the beginning of the poem, Horace seems to be returning to the thread of the argument from the opening verses. But something in the argument has changed. These people do not share the same attitudes as those claiming they wanted to trade places just twenty verses earlier. The figures in vv. 1-12 all were pursuing different paths (*diuersa sequentes* in v. 3). Everyone in vv. 28-32 speaks in unison:

> *ille grauem duro terram qui uertit aratro,*
> *perfidus hic caupo, miles nautaeque, per omne*
> *audaces mare qui currunt, hac mente laborem*
> *sese ferre, senes ut in otia tuta recedant,*
> *aiunt, cum sibi sint congesta cibaria [. . .].*
>
> That man who with his hard plow turns the earth,
> this faithless innkeeper, the soldiers, and sailors—daring men
> who rush across the whole sea, they say that they endure
> the toil with this purpose: so that as old men they may retire into
> safe leisure, when provisions have been heaped up for them.

Distinct identities disappear as the speakers aspire collectively to become financially secure "old men," regardless of their professions. A plural *aiunt* in v. 32 communicates the thoughts of a now univocal group.[29] Job-specific discontentment at work in vv. 4-12 is now abandoned, and everyone's ultimate motivation is collapsed into a shared purpose of leisurely retirement with provisions amassed. The passage marks an abrupt shift in the trajectory of the satire to a critique of greediness, signposted first with the verb *sint congesta* and then reinforced by repeated helpings of "heaping" terminology in the lines that follow (*aceruus* in vv. 34, 44, and 51). The focus on greediness maintains itself until vv. 108-9, when Horace identifies greed (*auarus* in v. 108) as the cause of the discontentment (*mempsimoiria*) that he described in the satire's opening

28 It is hard to avoid a "lawyer joke": is it coincidence that the innkeeper is described as *perfidus*?
29 For comparison, the singular *ait* was used in v. 5 to quote the speech of one individual.

verses:

> *illuc, unde abii, redeo, qui nemo, ut auarus,*
> *se probet ac potius laudet diuersa sequentis [. . .].*
>
> To that place from which I set out, I return: that no one, as a greedy man,
> approves himself but rather praises those pursuing other things [. . .].

The verbal echoes of the beginning of the satire in vv. 108-9 bring about a closing of the ring composition in the speaker's argument (*qui nemo* in vv. 1 and 108; *diuersa sequentes* in vv. 3 and 109), as does his explicit claim to return to the point from which he had set out (*illuc unde abii redeo* in v. 108). In the remainder of the poem (vv. 110-121), Horace ties envious discontentment to greed before abruptly cutting himself (and the poem) off. Although scholars are at odds as to how smoothly Horace integrates his nearly-80-line, poem-devouring "digression" into the framing discussion of discontentment, a reader may still want to ask Horace, *unde abisti?*—"Where did your digression begin?"[30] The answer lies with the laughter in vv. 23-7. The laughs that are offered and muffled in these verses are the segments of tape that pretend to hide—and thus draw attention to—thematic and structural seams in *Satires* 1.1.

The terms for laughter crop up when Horace implicitly apologizes for being too playful—too "gelastic"—and indicates that he will not persist in doing so: *ne sic ut qui iocularia ridens* / *percurram* (vv. 23-24). This is the second negative purpose clause offered in the opening 27 verses, the previous one occurring in vv. 14-15 when Horace declares, "But I don't want to keep you, so listen to where I'm going with things" (*ne te morer, audi,* / *quo rem deducam*). Sandwiched between these chattily-aborted digressions is another digression. In vv. 15-19, Horace imagines a theophany. A god, identified as Jupiter in v. 20, offers to ease everyone's professional discontentment by granting their wishes and arranging a career swap.[31] Whether it is

30 With varying success, according to scholars. See Gower's (2012) introduction to *Serm*. 1.1 for a summary of the various arguments regarding Horace's "level of competence" in handling the two themes separately and together (61).

31 Freudenburg (1993) 43 n. 92 detects elements of stage comedy in this digression and places Jupiter in the role of

the idea that people do not actually want what they claim to want or the depiction of an angry, huffing, puffing Jupiter who is ready to shut down the entire Roman prayer economy, Horace's statements in vv. 23-27 reveal that he thinks he may have said something in the previous verses that would lead people to picture him laughing.

Undoubtedly, this use of the vocabulary of laughter in *Satires* 1.1 has metacommunicative potential, as Horace offers a gelastic variation on a *praeteritio*. He invokes laughter retroactively in the process of dismissing it, and he highlights the laughable potential of whatever he has just said. The effect can be illustrated through a modern-day parallel: imagine that you have just walked into a room in time to hear a lecturer say, "Alright, now all laughing aside, I want to make a serious point." In the event that no smiles can be seen still lingering upon the lecturer's and audience members' lips, you would nevertheless assume that whatever preceded the lecturer's transition was met with laughter and was likely even intended to raise a laugh. This second point is particularly relevant to *Satires* 1.1 and can be seen more distinctly by a tweaking of the imagined scenario of our lecturer. She does not simply *say* her *praeteritio*. She *reads* it. The lecturer's remarks, the joke, and her dismissal of it, are revealed to be parts of a scripted sequence.[32]

Horace's hesitating speech and seemingly haphazard shifts in topic in the opening verses of *Satires* 1.1 must be viewed similarly. The piecemeal thoughts and near-digressions are all planted, all, to some degree, premeditated, and the proof lies in each well-crafted hexametric verse.[33] This incongruity between spontaneity and polish plays beneath the surface of the opening

comic stage director.

32 I suspect that many of us have observed the seams in these scripted moments (e.g., during student presentations or APA/AIA papers). I see it happen most often with inexperienced high school students who are asked to speak to adults at fundraisers. The student delivers a well-rehearsed joke and pauses for a response (that may or may not arrive) before returning to his or her notecard and reading something along the lines of "But joking aside . . ."

33 Cf. *Satires* 1.10.67-75 wherein the speaker touts the merits of laborious revision.

lines. We readers are eavesdropping on a conversation that is not really a conversation. Although words repeatedly occur denoting oral communication (e.g., *audi* in v. 14 and *dicere* in v. 24), we see before our eyes verses on a page. Even if the poem is being recited aloud to us, we are not the addressees; Horace clearly identifies "Maecenas" as his interlocutor in the first verse. But Maecenas' name gradually fades into the background, not to appear again in the first satire, and Horace shifts to a second-person singular personal pronoun (*te* in v. 14), as if he might really be speaking to "you"—concerned about delaying each of us.[34] When the conversational syntax comes to dominate in vv. 24-27 and the speaker presents himself as self-conscious about what he will say and how he will say it, ostensibly unable to articulate a complete thought but nevertheless writing his fragmented phrases in dactylic hexameter, the incongruity bubbles to the surface.[35] Laughter bubbles up with it.

The truncated thoughts and shifting syntax of the passage mean that Horace's comparison of laughter and cookies in vv. 23-26 is never sketched in detail. The juxtaposition renders the comparanda clearly enough: an individual may laugh while speaking the truth, just as teachers, in presenting their lessons, may motivate their elementary school students with cookies. The use of a simile that hinges upon teachers and the act of learning (*doctores* and *discere* in v. 26) casts laughter in a correspondingly positive light, as a means to truth and education. It also harks back to Lucretius' comparison of his poetry to a honeyed cup of medicine in *De Rerum Natura*.[36] Both similes draw upon the childhood experiences of *pueri* (*Satires* 1.1.25, *DRN* 1.936) and the

34 See Lyne (1995) 140: *Satires* 1.1 "makes extensive use of the Latin idiom of the indefinite second person singular: the use of 'you' for 'one' is colloquial in English, orthodox grammar in Latin. [. . .] [T]his idiom is of course ambiguous—and Horace will exploit the ambiguity not only here, but throughout the *Epistles*. The second person singular may be used for indefinite 'one'; but who is to say, if there is an available addressee, that it does not mean *you*?"

35 The idea that this incongruity is anything but cultivated does not do justice to Horace's ability to manipulate style and content independently. Parker (1986) argues of the apparent inconsistencies between *Satires* 1.4 and 1.10 that, "If Ovid could pare his five books of *Amores* down to three, Horace, with his insistence on the value of erasure, is not likely to have pushed for a *libellus* that did not perform precisely as he desired" (42).

36 The Lucretian simile occurs at *DRN* 1.935-950 and again at *DRN* 4.11-25.

manipulation of these children by better-knowing adults, but the agency of the children in the two similes marks a point of divergence. The *pueri* in Lucretius' simile are deceived (*puerorum aetas [. . .] deceptaque non capiatur*, 1.939-941), admittedly for their own good. Those in Horace's simile are made willing (*uelint ut discere* in v. 26). Everything is aboveboard for the schoolchildren in *Satires* 1.1. Coaxed but not deceived, they gobble up their cookies and lessons willingly, and, in this way, Horace incorporates a lesson about pedagogy itself. Young students do not have to be tricked into learning. Sometimes they simply need an incentive.

In introducing the instructor's distribution of incentives, Horace hints at an intention to use laughter in a similar way: as an accompaniment to truth-telling and, by extension, as a bonus for the addressee who appreciates laughter. He signposts the first appearance of laughter and jokes in the collection by breaking off mid-thought to defend laughter's merits and to highlight its unobtrusive impact on efforts to speak the truth.[37] The simile of the honest, earnest preschool teacher reflects positively on the objective and incentive alike. If laughter is an openly acknowledged source of motivation rather than an act of deception, truth-telling is an aim that requires no disguising.

Horace's comparison of the laughing truth-teller to the cookie-slinging, didactic figure in vv. 24-26 reflects the practice of *spoudaiogeloion* (σπουδαιογέλοιον)—"serious jesting" or the "seriocomic." The term is not attested in Classical literature until Strabo uses it to describe the Cynic Menippus (*Strab*. 16.2.29), but the conjoined deployment of seriousness and laughter, and the coordinate appearance of terms for "laughter" and "seriousness" in close proximity to one another, are evident in the works of Aristophanes (*Frogs* 391-392), Plato (*Laws* 816d9-e2), and Gorgias (*via* Aristotle's *Rh.* 1419b4-6), among others.[38] According to Giangrande (1972), the

37 Were laughter more akin to honey on the cup of bitter medicine, wouldn't it make more sense for Horace to incorporate it silently into his truth-telling mission rather than draw explicit attention to it? Then again, one can likewise wonder why Lucretius does not keep his mission secret.

38 I touch upon how these passages in Plato and Aristotle can be viewed as early articulations of the relief theory of

"formal alliance" of laughter and moral education occurred in the rhetorical works of Cynic philosophers, particularly when late Cynics endeavored to soften the abrasive approach to moralizing favored by earlier Cynics.[39] Horace might have encountered occasions of *spoudaiogeloion* through the works of Attic comedians as well as through diatribes and character-critiques authored by Cynic philosophers like Bion of Borysthenes, whose name Horace tellingly uses in *Epistles* 2.2.60 when he describes his collection of *Satires* as "Bion-esque chats" (*Bionei sermones*).[40]

To Horace's question in vv. 24-25, "What's to keep a laugher from speaking the truth?", an individual who subscribes to the technique of *spoudaiogeloion* answers: "Nothing . . . because the laugher can often do it better." When the satirist makes a case for the effectiveness of pairing laughter and seriousness for didactic purposes in the simile in vv. 24-26 of *Satires* 1.1, he begins to distinguish himself as such an individual.[41] But there are reasons to hesitate before immediately accepting this conclusion.

The presentation of laughter in *Satires* 1.1.23-27 allows the satirist to create a self-conscious and strained relationship with the behavior as well as with his literary medium. I previously note how Horace's fractured syntax and staccato expressions in this passage are at odds with their hexametric, poetic packaging. The narrator's self-consciously poetic side, which deploys terms for laughter, jokes, and play and is lingering behind every fine-tuned verse, is

laughter in the introduction.

39 Giangrande (1972) 8.

40 We have only fragmentary remains of Bion and none of the extant fragments contain the term *spoudaiogeloion*. Bion fr. 38A Kindstrand contains the verbs γελάω and σπουδάζω in close proximity to one another: Βίων ἔλεγε καταγελάστους εἶναι τοὺς σπουδάζοντας περὶ πλοῦτον, ὃν τύχη μὲν παρέχει, ἀνελευθερία δὲ φυλάττει, χρηστότης δὲ ἀφαιρεῖται—"Bion said that men who strive for wealth are utterly ridiculous—wealth, which fortune provides, illiberality protects, and use takes away." This fragment introduces a variation on *spoudaiogeloion* according to which seriousness itself is presented as an object of ridicule. Moles (2007) 165-168 makes a clear case for the "Bionian" nature of Horace's *Satires*.

41 Horace assertively promotes the ideals of *spoudaiogeloion* in a passage from the beginning of *Satires* 1.10 (discussed in the following pages) wherein he extols the merits of laughter for addressing serious topics. Hubbard (1981) 317-318, in drawing a connection between the two passages, devotes the bulk of his attention to 1.10.11-14 and the different styles of *sermo* indicated by *tristis* and *iocosus*.

complemented by a haphazardly-conversational side, which finds itself tongue-tied when speaking about these same topics. If we focus on the conversational fiction and the illusion of speech, the sentiments and structure of these verses construct an ambivalence in the satirical *persona* regarding laughter, jokes, and play. It is as if there is a writing-satirist and a speaking-satirist.[42] For the speaking-satirist, his interrupted *praeteritio*, his rhetorical question, and his simile-*cum*-answer all belie an uncertainty about the role that gelastic behaviors will play in the particular poem and the poetic book.

The incomplete thought that precedes the rhetorical question in vv. 23-24 lays out the first clues of the satirist's tentativeness toward laughter: "Anyway, to avoid rushing through this like some laugher through / one-liners [. . .]"[43] The statement disappears into the interrupting question. The sequence allows the satirist to write himself into a reluctant dance with laughter in which he always keeps the dangerous behavior at arm's length. Setting aside the aforementioned analogy of the lecturer who, with her scripted dismissal of laughter, draws attention to the potential laugh-worthiness of whatever was previously said, we must suspend awareness for the moment of Horace's poetic frame and inhabit the conversational fiction, as if we were bearing witness to a spontaneous, spoken *praeteritio*. As in every *praeteritio*, scripted or otherwise, the satirist places the events he intends to avoid before his addressee's eyes. He invites laughter and jokes onto the poetic dance floor while facing the opposite direction, extending his hand behind and pulling a face at laughter's expense.

---

42 I have thus far drawn attention to the deliberately-versifying, poetic *persona* of the satirist in this first satire. In qualifying this *persona* with the adjective "poetic," I imply the existence of other *personae*, although I do not mean the more obvious *personae* that Horace adopts in, for example, *Satires* 1.8 with the speaker Priapus. To some extent, I am differentiating between Horace's authorial and narrative *personae* (for which, see the discussion of "face" in the introduction to Oliensis (1998)), but a finer distinction must be drawn. My focus is on the multiple *personae* inhabited by the satirical narrator, a bifurcated figure who writes and speaks simultaneously throughout the first book of *Satires*. Thus one could identify the author Horace, the satirist who writes (of whom we catch a retrospective glance, e.g., through the final verse of *Satires* 1.10), and the satirist who speaks.

43 *Satires* 1.1.23-4: *praeterea, ne sic ut qui iocularia ridens / percurram*.

Another locus of ambivalence appears in the simile of vv. 23-24. The nominative participle appears to modify the first-person subject of *percurram* (v. 23), but the "laugher" is, strictly speaking, the subject of its own clause within the simile.[44] Horace stops short of confessing to laughing himself or to telling any jokes—a reluctance similar to the one that the narrator maintains toward presenting himself laughing throughout the *Liber Sermonum*.[45] Nevertheless, with the condensed simile, Horace *invites* confusion of the joke-telling "laugher" with the satirist himself, hinting at the association but abstaining from claiming it outright. Additional attention to a potential audience's participation in laughable matters is accommodated by Horace's mention of *iocularia* in v. 23; jokes could be the stimuli for an audience's laughter, and these are jokes that the laugher will *not* rush through. Such is the effect of Horace's laughing *praeteritio*: he allows his addressee to imagine him laughing and telling jokes, but he simultaneously paints a large, red X through this image. By the conclusion of v. 25, one might believe that all laughter—the speaker's own and his audience's—will be avoided.

But the vocabulary for laughter appears again in the very next phrase. Horace asks in vv. 24-25, "[A]lthough what's to keep a laugher from speaking / the truth?"—*quamquam ridentem dicere uerum* / *quid uetat?* The interruption is dramatic. Horace, having pulled laughter onto the dance floor only to proclaim his intention to ignore it, declares indignantly that one would have every right to turn around and pull it close. He does not say "I" or "me" or include himself in the rhetorical question. Even if, as in v. 23, the most likely potential "laugher" is the speaker himself, the *ridentem* in v. 24 could refer to anyone. The generalizing, rhetorical question allows Horace to set the stage for a broad point while maintaining his own distance from the particular behavior.

44 Gowers (2012) 68 glosses the Latin as follows: *ne sic (haec ridens) percurram ut qui iocularia ridens percurrit*. She supplies a *ridens* to modify *percurram*, and while this is certainly implied, I believe it is deliberately ommitted.

45 Horace elsewhere in the *Satires* (1.4, 1.5, and 1.10, all of which are treated in the following pages) takes pains to combat the impression that he aims only to elicit laughter from others or that he laughs alone and for his own pleasure.

The construction also allows Horace to suggest an answer without stating it. The simile that follows in vv. 25-26 implies that the speaker considers laughter no obstacle to true speech but, rather, a potential asset, and yet the reader is left to draw this conclusion for herself.

The unstated answer to the question seems unproblematic in the broadest sense; no logical necessities prevent the coexistence of speaking the truth and laughing. But one need not think long to imagine everyday situations in which a laughing delivery might complicate impressions of truthful communication—for the listener, if not for the speaker. If a mechanic laughs while telling you that your car is completely safe to drive, you might hesitate a moment and seek some clarification before climbing behind the wheel. Nevertheless, before the addressee has time to envision such situations, conversational momentum propels the satirist into his pedagogical simile.

The simile is an abstraction—a rhetorical evasion that does not answer the general question but redirects the reader to a narrower conclusion. Even from a syntactical standpoint, the second half of the simile dangles and clouds the parallelism; a declarative statement functions as the vehicle for an interrogative tenor. Yes, perhaps in the way that cookies aid educators, laughter can aid in "speaking the truth." But this is hardly conclusive proof that laughter and true speech are an uncomplicated pairing. And what happens to a student's lessons when he or she eats too many cookies? A speaker's excessive laughter might impede his efforts to speak truthfully or erode an addressee's confidence that he speaks without guile.

Horace's rhetorically convoluted approach to laughter, jokes, and play in vv. 23-27 betrays and enacts his awareness of laughter's complexity, both as a behavior, and as a literary presence in the beginning of his *Satires*. He can scarcely finish articulating his intention to avoid laughter and jokes before he comes to their defense, a defense that is conversationally scattered and impulsive on the one hand, and metrically taut and refined on the other. Despite the

arguments he makes in laughter's favor, Horace seems to conclude that laughter will prove too substantial a distraction in his satire, and he declares his intention in v. 27 to proceed with notions of play, which presumably include the laughter and jokes introduced in vv. 23-26, set aside. If the vocabulary of laughter and the risible is any indication, he stays true to his word for the bulk of the poem; a single textual laugh appears in the remainder of *Satires* 1.1 when Horace accuses his addressee with the question, "Why are you laughing?"—*quid rides?* in v. 69.

Horace is wary of the laughter he introduces, defends, and dismisses in the first verses of *Satires* 1.1, and the *persona* he constructs of a self-interrupting, speaker-*cum*-versifier reflects and creates this wariness. As the *Liber Sermonum* progresses, wariness gradually, and conversationally, crystalizes into a direct engagement with the polarizing potential of laughter and laughter's role in the Horatian satirist's project.

Section II: Apologies for Laughter in *Satires* 1.4 and 1.10

It has been recognized for over a century that Horace's defense of satire is also a declaration of his program—an act of literary reverse-psychology.[46] The charges to which the satirist responds are always introduced by the satirist himself, either quoted verbatim or implied in his conversational replies, and a surprising number of the accusations relate to the satirist's relationship to laughter. I propose that the moments throughout *Satires* 1.4 and in the beginning of 1.10 in which the satirist relates and replies to criticism of his relationship with laughter function as moments of generic self-fashioning. Through his *apologiae*, the satirist frames laughter as an inextricable feature of his satirical program.

Satires 1.4 is regarded by some as the first programmatic poem in Horace's collection.[47]

46 See Hendrickson (1900) *passim*, Dickie (1981) 186, and Gowers (2012) 149: "H. adopts defensive manoeuvres that define modern satire in the act of effacing it."

47 Plaza (2006) describes it as "the first of Horace's programme satires" (279) and Gowers (2012) as "H's first overtly programmatic poem" (147). Hubbard (1981) regards *Satires* 1.1 as an earlier declaration of program.

The poem's programmatic status hinges upon Horace's overt literary criticism of himself and of his generic predecessor Lucilius throughout the poem. Despite its literary focus, a pretense of oral communication is maintained in the satire, and bursts of dialogue surface at intervals. Horace, however, has his own thoughts better organized; he does not interrupt himself in the way that he did in *Satires* 1.1, nor do his digressions, which still meander, derail him for quite so long. Interruptions are instead cast in the words of interlocutors who speak to and about the satirist and redirect the trajectory of the poem gradually. These speakers' interjections are, like everything else in the poem, scripted, metrically-precise constructions by the poetic *persona*, but the illusion of conversational spontaneity and real-time casual discussion allows the poetic *persona* to construct his own identity in the words of others. And when Horace gives voice to the charges that hypothetical interlocutors lodge against his satires, they—and he— repeatedly fixate on laughter.

The triangulation between "they," the satirical persona's "I," and an implied or explicit "you" is an important feature of Horace's programmatic *apologiae*, but it is not always easy to see how the triangle takes shape in the conversational *milieu* of a given satire.[48] In vv. 22-25 of *Satires* 1.4, Horace explains that he keeps his writings to himself because they are not particularly pleasing to the general public. His potential readership—the *turba* of v. 25—is the target of his moral criticism, and no one likes to be criticized. Horace nevertheless continues: "Choose (*elige*) whomever from the midst of the crowd: / he toils either because of greed or wretched ambition.[49] It is not clear to whom Horace addresses the imperative, "Choose!" He has yet to name an addressee. The opening lines of the poem (vv. 1-13) are filled with declarations about Lucilius' poetic pedigree and with critiques of his rambling style, but these are declarations

48 See n. 34 for Lyne's (1995) comments on the indefinite second-person singular in *Satires* 1.1.
49 *Satires* 1.4.25-26: *quemuis media elige turba / aut ob auaritiam aut misera ambitione laborat.*

to no audience in particular. In vv. 14-16, Horace quotes a challenge from Crispinus along the lines of, "Who can write more," and it corresponds to his own critiques of Lucilius. Thanking god that he is a man of few words, Horace launches into a caricature of an unidentified second-person singular (*tu* . . . *mauis* in v. 19 and v. 21) who huffs and puffs like goatskin bellows (vv. 17-21). Porphyrio 1.4.14-15.1 interprets the second-person verb as referring to Crispinus, whose challenge Horace has just quoted, but it might also refer to Fannius, whom Horace sarcastically calls "blessed" for his statue and bookcases in the subsequent verse (v. 22). The second-person pronoun and verb in vv. 19 and 21 are easily read into the exchanges with Crispinus and Fannius, but even if these poets are treated to direct address from time to time, they are not Horace's sustained addressees. The speaker's slights of Crispinus and Fannius place them unambiguously among the *turba* who warrant critique.

Whoever is addressed by the imperative *elige* in v. 25 seems to stand away from the *turba* and, in a sense, alongside Horace. If one wishes to identify an actual candidate, the most reasonable option is Maecenas who is named by Horace as his addressee in *Satires* 1.1.1 and 1.3.64 and whose exceptional nature is proclaimed in direct address at the outset of *Satires* 1.6. But Maecenas' name appears nowhere in 1.4, and so one must cautiously conclude that Horace addresses an anonymous individual somewhere between ally and enemy—an everyman to whom Horace must present and defend himself without mounting an attack. The point is pivotal to any interpretation of *Satires* 1.4 as a programmatic *apologia*. Horace requires a foil as he talks about his poetry, an addressee to whom he can explain himself while keeping his sword sheathed, and he identifies this addressee with his order of "Choose!" in v. 25.

In establishing a potential ally in the reader, Horace simultaneously others "them"—the countless, immoderate people deemed "worthy of blame" (*utpote plures / culpari dignos* in vv. 24-25). In vv. 27-32, Horace provides examples of their blameworthiness as he circles back to

the reason he keeps his writings to himself: "All of these men fear verses, hate poets"—*omnes hi metuunt uersus, odere poetas* (v. 33).[50] A warning is embedded therein: "you" run the risk of joining "them" if you also begin to fear verse and hate poets. And, as part of "them," you also likewise confess yourself to be "worthy of blame."

The triangle of "they" (Horace's opponents), "you" (the addressee), and "I" (the speaker Horace) is thus gradually sketched in *Satires* 1.4, but the poem enacts Horace's effort to assimilate "you" and "I" into a collective "we"—to collapse the triangle into a simple binary wherein the reader is invited to sympathize with the speaker Horace. The last verses of the satire, wherein Horace says he will force his addressee to join his poetic cause, witness this invitation's mutation into a threat. Horace speaks of himself as part of a plurality when he compares his band of poets to a crowd of Jews: "[. . .] and like the Jews, we will force you to join this crowd."[51] The triangulation narrows to a sharper point as Horace's focus on persuasion increases. He constructs himself and, by extension, his poetry as under attack, and he sees fit to explain himself to a potential ally—a willing listener. In this way *Satires* 1.4 becomes an *apologia*.[52]

In vv. 34-38, Horace gives a single voice to his detractors' fear and hatred:

'faenum habet in cornu, longe fuge; dummodo risum
excutiat, sibi non, non cuiquam parcet amico 35
et quodcumque semel chartis illeuerit, omnis

50 The *omnes* is ambiguous and, appearing as it does first in the line, ultimately influences every noun in the verse. I translate it here as modifier of *hi* and thus a reminder from Horace that the people he has described in the previous verses are all a collective of transgressors who share a distaste for poetry that is as universal as their moral shortcomings. Are we to have in mind the greedy and discontent soldiers, sea merchants, lawyers, farmers and innkeepers from the opening of *Satires* 1.1?

51 *Satires* 1.4.140-143, in particular vv. 142-143: *ac ueluti te / Iudaei cogemus in hanc concedere turbam.* Gowers (2012) explains that "the comparison is based on the Jews' reputation for being numerous and evangelical" (182).

52 Kenney (1962) does not attend to *Satires* 1.4 and 1.10 in his explanation of the "pattern of the apology" in Roman verse satire but instead focuses on *Satires* 2.1, which, in his words, "has a clearly enunciatory and apologetic role" (35). I believe his proposed pattern applies to 1.4 and 1.10 as well: "First, a pronouncement, lofty to the point of bombast, of the satirist's high purpose and mission. Second, a warning by a friend or the poet's alter ego or the voice of prudence—call it what you will. Third, an appeal by the satirist to the great example of Lucilius. Fourth, a renewed warning. Fifth and last, evasion, retractation, equivocation" (36). Plaza (2006) interprets the fifth component as "the concluding joke" (38), and the joke she explores at the end of *Satires* 2.1 culminates with laughter.

gestiet a furno redeuntis scire lacuque
et pueros et anos.'

"He has hay on his horn, keep your distance; so long as he
shakes out a laugh, he spares neither himself nor any friend,
and whatever he has once smeared on sheets, he will exult
that all those returning from the bakery and the lake know it,
both boys and old ladies."

The idiomatic expression of v. 34, while understandable in general, is less clear in its details. Pfeiffer detects an allusion to the first of Callimachus' *Iambi* in the phrase *longe fuge* (v. 34), but no reference to a horned animal survives in the fragmentary remains of the Callimachean passage.[53] In *Iambi* 13 (203.52-53), a poet is said to be angered "to the horn," a formulation appearing in Euripides' *Bacchae* 743 and a passage to which Horace may be alluding when he threatens to raise his horns in *Epodes* 6.11-12: *caue, caue, namque in malos asperrimus* / *parata tollo cornua*.[54] These three references to the brandishing of one's horn (in Euripides' *Bacchae*, Callimachus *Iambi*, and Horace's *Epodes*) hinge on the anger of the poet, while *Satires* 1.4.34 makes no mention of anger. Moreover, neither the Euripidean passage nor Callimachus' fragment mentions hay. So why would someone avoid the ox with hay on his horns? The scholiast offers a reasonable explanation: "In Rome, moreover, we still see today that hay that is fashioned into a ring is placed on the little horn of an ox, by which a sign is given to passers-by to avoid him."[55] The hay is not the irritant but a message to others. The interlocutor's speech, in describing an archaic public alarm system, triggers the alarm and becomes the hay on Horace's horn. Thus the idiom in v. 34 does not, in fact, critique Horace in any specifics. It simply states that his reputation precedes him. Only then does the interlocutor begin to explain what that reputation

53 Pfeiffer (1949) 170 on Call. *Iambi* 191.79: 'φεῦγε· βάλλει· φεῦγ'' ἐρεῖ 'τὸν ἄνθρωπον.' Clayman (1980) hypothesizes that the individual who is being fled in *Iambi* 191.79 is the poet Hipponax "whose words are [. . .] unwelcome" (15).

54 Clayman (1980) 47 n. 77. For anger and horns, cf. Verg. *Georg*. 3.232 and Ov. *Met.* 8.882. and Ecl. 9.25

55 Porphyrio 1.4.34.3-1.4.35.1: *Romae autem uidemus hodieque faenum uelut ansulam fact<u>m in cornulo boui poni, quo signum datur transeuntibus, ut eum uitent.*

involves. Laughter (*risum*) in v. 34 is the first particular complaint mentioned.

According to the interlocutor, Horace pursues a laugh without regard for himself or for others. By Aristotle's definition (nearly verbatim[56]), he is a βωμολόχος—a *scurra*. The direction of the laughter is of no consequence to such a man. Laughter is an end in itself, regardless of its object or source. He may even be willing to make himself and his friends the targets of laughter, or he may be unsparing and relentless in his attempts to provoke their and his own laughter. The poet just *needs* laughter. That he is a poet is confirmed in v. 36, although the interlocutor does not ascribe particular care to this poet's production (e.g., *illeuerit*). In any case, the poet loves spreading his filth amidst all of the gossipy populations—old women and young boys. It is unclear whether they are reading and disseminating his work themselves or are mere indicators of just how far (i.e., low) it has already traveled, but the interlocutor portrays Horace laughing—or at least relishing laughter—beyond all bounds of discretion.

The "accuser" is not identified, but the fact that one person speaks rather than a collective is confirmed when Horace uses singular imperatives in his rejoinder at the end of v. 38: "Come now, hear a few things in response"—***age****dum pauca* ***accipe*** *contra*. Whoever is leveling the charges, Horace responds as if that person is present before him. But, of course, the accuser *is* present. Had Horace assigned a name to this interlocutor, readers might assume that the satirist is engaging with a particular critic. With an anonymous accuser, the accusations remain unattached, and readers are given an opportunity to recall that the satirist himself is creating the voice of the accuser. Horace, in the accusation of his interlocutor, confesses a feature of his poetry that is potentially objectionable, but he also dictates the terms of the objection. And there among the first of these terms is laughter—*risus* in v. 34. When he represents the arguments of an opponent of his satire, Horace begins with laughter, describing it in all its irresistible (for particular

56 See the discussion of Aristotle's theories of laughter in the introduction.

speakers and audiences) and frustrating (for opponents) glory.

In his response to the anonymous accuser, Horace first argues that he is not *really* a poet (vv. 39-63)[57] before explaining that innocent people have nothing to fear from him (64-70) because his work is not really shared with the public (vv. 71-78). An interlocutor interrupts again in vv. 78-79 and prompts an impassioned response from the satirist in vv. 79-93. This accuser, like the one who speaks in vv. 34-38, remains unnamed, but a laughter-conscious Horace operates behind both accusation and response:

'laedere gaudes'
inquit 'et hoc studio prauus facis.' unde petitum
hoc in me iacis? est auctor quis denique eorum,
uixi cum quibus? absentem qui rodit, amicum
qui non defendit alio culpante, solutos
qui captat risus hominum famamque dicacis,
fingere qui non uisa potest, commissa tacere
qui nequit: hic niger est, hunc tu, Romane, caueto.
saepe tribus lectis uideas cenare quaternos,
e quibus unus amet quauis aspergere cunctos
praeter eum qui praebet aquam; post hunc quoque potus,
condita cum uerax aperit praecordia Liber:
hic tibi comis et urbanus liberque uidetur
infesto nigris: ego si risi, quod ineptus
pastillos Rufillus olet, Gargonius hircum,
liuidus et mordax uideor tibi?

"You love to wound,"
one says, "and you do this crookedly and zealously." From where
do you make this attack on me? Is there an author of these things
with whom I have lived? He who back-bites, he who fails to
defend a friend when another is blaming him, he who aims for
the unfettered laughs of men and the reputation of a wit,
who is able to fashion nonexistent things, who cannot keep silent
about secrets: he is the blackguard. Beware, Roman, this man!
Often when, on the three couches, you would see foursomes dining,
one of these would love to splatter everyone in any way
besides the guy who supplies the water; later, drunk, him too,
when truthful Liber reveals hidden feelings:
to you, the enemy of blackguards, this man seems cultured
and frank. But I, if I laughed because foolish Rufillus

57 I treat this passage at the beginning of this chapter.

smells like menthol, Gargonius like a goat—
do I seem to you to be spiteful and cutting?

The accuser does not refer to explicit laughter with the term *gaudes* in v. 78, but the verb approaches the semantic territory of *gestiet* in v. 37.[58] The satirist's self-indulgent motivations are on trial in both accusations. Indeed, the accuser's declaration in vv. 78-79 paraphrases and compresses the one from vv. 34-38, the main difference being that the charge that is levied later in the poem is also more personal—a direct attack in the second-person.

Horace's reply suggests that the earlier attack—the one that foregrounded a fixation on laughter—is still very much on his mind: terms for laughter and the risible feature (*risus* and *dicax* in v. 83 and *risi* in v. 91) amidst broader considerations of friendship and conviviality.[59] He indicates two different types of laughter in his reply: there is bad laughter (vv. 81-90), but then there is *his* laughter (vv. 91-93). In describing the bad laughter, the satirist demonstrates his agreement with many of the sentiments announced by his anonymous accuser in vv. 34-38. The man who treats laughter as an end in itself (*dummodo risum* / *excutiat* in vv. 34-35 vs. *solutos* / *qui captat risus hominum* in vv. 82-83) demonstrates an irresponsible use of the behavior. He neither spares a friend (*cuiquam parcet amico* in v. 35) nor defends him (*amicum* / *qui non defendit alio culpante* vv. 81-82). "Keep your distance," the first accuser announces (*longe fuge* in v. 34); "Beware!" says Horace (*hunc tu, Romane, caueto* in v. 85).

Even after this scathing portrait of a man who abuses friends and laughter alike, the satirist does not disavow laughter altogether. He still laughs—at least conditionally; the nesting of *risi* in a conditional sentence allows him to maintain a modicum of distance from the dangerous behavior. In any case, his is a different type of laughter. His rhetorical question in vv.

58 *OLD* s.v. *gestio* (3).

59 Hendrickson (1900) 133 n. 2 argues that vv. 81-85 should be assigned to Horace's interlocutor. See Hunter (1985) 489 n. 53 for a summary of the scholarly debate regarding to whom these lines should belong. I follow Shackleton Bailey's text and give these verses to the satirist.

91-93 hints that this laughter is not "spiteful and cutting" (v. 93). He laughs because of men with bad hygiene, not men with bad conceptions of friendship, and he offers for comparison a portrait of his interlocutor failing to defend a friend adequately (vv. 93-100). Horace declares that such a defect (*uitium* in v. 101) has no place in his papers (vv. 100-103). "But if I speak a little too freely, perhaps a little too jokingly (*iocosius*), you will grant me this justification with forgiveness [. . .]," he states, with the vocabulary of the risible (*iocosius*) occurring in another conditional, although this one less cautious—more vivid—than that of vv. 91-93.[60] Twice in fifteen verses he (hypothetically) associates himself with laughing and joking. In the remainder of the poem, Horace relates a lengthy explanation (v.105-140) of how his upbringing influenced his satirical practice and caps things off with his threat to "convert" his interlocutor to poetry.

Readers are presented with repeated accusations in *Satires* 1.4 that associate Horace, in his role as satirist, with laughter and the laughable. These accusations appear as anonymous items of hate mail—no signature and no return address, and they present Horace's use of laughter as predatory and malignant. Yet Horace recounts these letters to his addressee (and his readers) and, in replying to them (which is to say, in offering his *apologiae*), he repeatedly admits to consorting with laughter. The key difference is that the use of laughter to which he admits is harmless, and on the off chance that his jokes go a little too far, he begs your forgiveness. But when the Horatian satirist reads his hate mail aloud, and when the Horatian satirist, doe-eyed and apologetic, confesses his association with *innocent* laughter, the reader must recall that the very same figure is both accuser and defender. Horace sends himself the items of hate mail, all of which are tellingly composed in the same conversational meter as his *Sermones*, and he implants in his reader's mind a "worst-case-scenario." But before this scenario can linger there for too long, he responds in his own voice with an explanation far preferable to that "worst-case-

60 *Satires* 1.4.103-105: *liberius si / dixero quid, si forte iocosius, hoc mihi iuris / cum uenia dabis [. . .].*

scenario."[61] Whether the reader agrees with the accusations in the hate mail or with the satirist's responses, she ultimately agrees *with* the satirist that laughter is a central—if contentious—part of his program.

The *apologiae* that Horace offers throughout *Satires* 1.4 are quite literally "speeches in defense," a fact made most apparent by the way that quoted attacks erupt throughout the poem and seemingly compel the satirist to respond on the spot.[62] But the *apologia* that Horace offers in *Satires* 1.10 takes shape differently; he opens *Satires* 1.10 already on the defensive. The verbatim accusations to which he is initially replying are not quoted, but he seems eager to revisit and justify some of his recent remarks (*nempe [. . .] dixi* in v. 1) about Lucilius, many of which resemble comments the satirist makes about Lucilius in *Satires* 1.4.[63] It is as if he is responding to an attack in which his opponent quoted his own poetry back at him. His first verses rephrase his criticism of Lucilius' versification from 1.4.8-13, but he tempers the negative critique with an acknowledgment of his predecessor's great wit (*sale multo*, v. 3). He goes on to explain in vv. 7-15 that wit alone does not make good verse:

ergo non satis est risu diducere rictum
auditoris; et est quaedam tamen hic quoque virtus.
est breuitate opus, ut currat sententia neu se
inpediat uerbis lassas onerantibus auris, 10
et sermone opus est modo tristi, saepe iocoso,
defendente uicem modo rhetoris atque poetae,
interdum urbani, parcentis uiribus atque
extenuantis eas consulto. ridiculum acri
fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat res. 15

Therefore it does not suffice to part the jaws of a listener

61 From a reader response standpoint, this movement from "bad laughter" to "better laughter" (if genuine) could occasion a sense of relief that results in actual laughter. A similar discussion in the context of movements from heavier to lighter genres in *recusationes* appears in Chapter 6.

62 LSJ s.v. ἀπολογία.

63 This need not mean that Horace replies to actual accusations arising from readers of *Satires* 1.4. Gowers (2012) 173 explains that a similar move in *Satires* 1.4 can be regarded as "fictive intratextual 'stock-taking.'" (She thanks John Henderson for the "stock-taking" portion of the formulation.)

with a laugh; yet there is also a certain virtue in this.
One needs brevity, so the thought runs freely and does not
trip itself up with words that burden fatigued ears,
and one needs speech, now harsh, often playful,
now maintaining the place of the speaker and poet,
but sometimes of the urbane man, reserving his strength and
thinning it deliberately. A little laugh, by and large,
cuts weighty matters better and more firmly than sharpness.

As in *Satires* 1.1.23-27, the satirist seems unable to critique laughter without immediately blunting this criticism in subsequent verses. The laughter of one's audience is clearly regarded as an insufficient objective for a versifier in vv. 7-8 of *Satires* 1.10, but Horace scarcely finishes relating the point before be backpedals to note that eliciting laughter from an audience is no mean feat. In vv. 11-14, he articulates a stylistic rubric that encourages variability, and he indicates that both harsh and playful speech—*sermo tristis* and *sermo iocosus*—are necessities (v. 11). In the final third of the passage (vv. 13-15), a certain Horatian partiality toward laughter and playfulness reveals itself. The *urbanus* man (v. 13) who makes use of the *sermo iocusus* is granted an additional half-verse of description that emphasizes his restraint and, by extension, his considerable power. The verb *parcentis* invites the reader of the *Sermones* to recall the accusation lodged against the satirist in *Satires* 1.4.35 that he spares neither himself nor a friend in his pursuit of a laugh: *sibi non, non cuiquam parcet amico*. This *urbanus* man is more responsible with his strength.

The speaker's sympathies for the *sermo iocosus* are ultimately confirmed when he proclaims that laughter is an effective tool for addressing matters of import. After the urbane man has taken hold of this style of speech and thinned it appropriately, a diminutive of the *risus* of v. 7 is what remains: *ridiculum* in v. 14. The immediate meaning of the term remains "the laughable," but I translate *ridiculum* as "a little laugh" in order to draw out the incongruity Horace sets out between laughter and the sizable, weighty, and important matters through which

it cuts. What these *magnae res* are and why they must be "cut" is not addressed in the immediate context;[64] the focus falls squarely on ("little") laughter's power. The sententious declaration of vv. 14-15 reads as a general advertisement for *spoudaiogeloion*, but one that places particular emphasis on the *geloion*.

The emphasis is maintained in the verse and a half that follow this pronouncement wherein the vocabulary of the risible is conveyed with the demonstrative *hoc*:

> *illi, scripta quibus comoedia prisca uiris est,* 16
> *hoc stabant, hoc sunt imitandi.*
>
> Those men, by whom early comedy was written 16
> relied upon this [i.e., the *ridiculum*]—they must be imitated in this.

I supply *ridiculum* as the antecedent of *hoc* in v. 17, although Horace may very well be referring to the entire sentiment expressed in vv. 14-15. In either case, he stresses the merits of laughter and the laughable. Moreover, with his mention of *comoedia prisca*, he nods to the treatment of comedians with which he began *Satires* 1.4 and aligns his own work with theirs.[65]

Horace begins *Satires* 1.10 by defending recent remarks he made in critique of Lucilius' poetry, but his (resumed) attack on the ur-satirist's stylistic shortcomings also functions as a vehicle for praise of Lucilius' wit. Of course, this praise is not unconditional; abundance of wit and the laughter it provokes are simply insufficient (*non satis est*, v. 7)[66] to make up for other shortcomings. Horace's criticism of Lucilius' verse nevertheless doubles as an insistent *apologia* for laughter. He identifies wit (*sal*, v. 4) as praiseworthy (*laudatur*, v. 4), playful speech (*iocosus*, v. 11) as necessary (*opus est*, v. 11), and the competent use of the laughable (*ridiculum*, v. 14) as worth emulating (*sunt imitandi*, v. 17).

"It is not enough to provoke laughter," says Horace in 1.10.7-8, but his repeated pairing

64 Cf. *Satires* 1.5.28 for Horace's use of *magnae res* in reference to politics.
65 Parker (1986) 41-54 argues persuasively for the consistency of 1.4 and 1.10 in their representations of Lucilius. See also Freudenburg (1993) 103.
66 *Non satis est* also appears in 1.4.54 when Horace writes about what "makes" poetry.

of satire (and the satirist) in *Satires* 1.4 and 1.10 with wit, jokes, and laughter demonstrates that the behavior and its attendant vocabulary remain a necessary part of the satirical program: laughter *must* be provoked. His responses to quoted and implied attacks on his own use of laughter assert that a satirist simply needs to use the right kind of laughter, for example, harmless (1.4.91-93) or "little" laughter (1.10.14), and he needs to use it in the right circumstances, such as in critiques of minor faults (1.4.91-93). Or are the right circumstances for laughter during treatments of "weighty matters" (1.10.14-15)? The satirist's presentation of the proper spirit of laughter remains relatively consistent, embodying Aristotle's ideal of εὐτραπελία in the *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.8,[67] but the examples he adduces for some of the proper circumstances for laughter, even when he is explicitly attending to the topic, are not coherent.

Laughter appears scattered throughout the *Liber Sermonum* in a variety of situations, as does the vocabulary for laughter and the risible, and I examine select occasions of laughter in *Satires* 1.7 and 1.5 in the final section of this chapter. In anticipation of those arguments that follow, a particular detail of the conclusions arrived at in the previous pages warrants restating, namely, the fact that Horace presents laughter as a fundamental part of his satiric program without admitting to having laughed in his role as satirist. He places accusations of buffoonish laughter in interlocutor's mouths and embraces first-person associations with laughter only conditionally. While I have represented these attacks, defenses, and evasions as points of programmatic self-fashioning throughout which the satirist incorporates laughter while maintaining control of his text, one may wonder whether they also betray a more deep-seated caution held by the satirist for the potentially-prickly topic of laughter.

Section III: Dispensing (with) Laughter as Gelastic Caution

67 See the discussion of Aristotle's treatments of laughter in the introduction, pp. 32-42.

Satires 1.7, the shortest poem in the book and, in the estimation of some critics, little more than a "B-side" to the rest of Horace's *Liber Sermonum*,[68] contains one occasion of explicit laughter (*ridetur* in v. 22) and one instance of the vocabulary of the risible (*salso* in v. 28). From the standpoint of plot, the "mock-epic" verbal battle between a proscribed Rupilius Rex and a Greek named Persius seems little more than a lengthy, 34-verse tee-up for an easy pun.[69]

proscripti Regis Rupili pus atque uenenum
hybrida quo pacto sit Persius ultus, opinor
omnibus et lippis notum et tonsoribus esse.
Persius hic permagna negotia diues habebat
Claxomenis, et iam litis cum Rege molestas,
durus homo atque odio qui posset uincere Regem,
confidens, tumidus, adeo sermonis amari
Sisennas, Barros ut equis praecurreret albis.
ad Regem redeo. postquam nihil inter utrumque
conuenit—hoc etenim sunt omnes iure molesti
quo fortes quibus aduersum bellum incidit; inter
Hectora Priamiden animosum atque inter Achillem
ira fuit capitalis, ut ultima diuideret mors,
non aliam ob causam nisi quod uirtus in utroque
summa fuit: duo si discordia uexat inertis
aut si disparibus bellum incidat, ut Diomedi
cum Lycio Glauco, discedat pigrior ultro
muneribus missis: Bruto praetore tenente
ditem Asiam Rupili et Persi par pugnat, uti non
compositum melius cum Bitho Bachius. in ius
acres procurrunt, magnum spectaculum uterque.
Persius exponit causam; ridetur ab omni
conuentu; laudat Brutum laudatque cohortem,
solem Asiae Brutum appellat stellasque salubris
appellat comites excepto Rege; Canem illum,
inuisum agricolis sidus, uenisse: ruebat
flumen ut hibernum, fertur quo rara securis.
tum Praenestinus salso multoque fluenti
expressa arbusto regerit conuicia, durus
uindemiator et inuictus, cui saepe uiator
cessisset magna compellans uoce cuculum.
at Graecus, postquam est Italo perfusus aceto,
Persius exclamat per magnos, Brute, deos te

68 Perhaps to be read alongside *Satires* 1.2 and 1.8. Zetzel (1980) says, "[B]oth 7 and 8 are jokes (and not very good ones at that)" (66). Gowers (2012) 250 highlights some of the negative reception 1.7 has received from such figures as Dryden, Fraenkel, and Rudd.

69 See, e.g., Rudd (1966) 67.

oro, qui reges consueris tollere, cur non
hunc Regem iugulas? Operum hoc, mihi crede, tuorum est.

The way in which the gall and venum of the proscribed Rupilius King
was punished by the mixed-blood Persius, I suppose
is known to all the bleary-eyed men and barbers.
This Persius was managing big business (he was rich) at
Clazomenae and, beyond, he was managing with King vexing lawsuits,
a tough man and one who was able to best King in hostility.
He was confident, proud, with such a handle on harsh speech
that he could outstrip fast-talkers and blowhards on white horses.
I come back to King: after nothing was settled between the two—
(indeed, in this way all man are vexed in a legal case,
in the way that brave men are, for whom a hostile war comes:
between Hector son of Priam and courageous Achilles there was
such deadly anger that finally death would divide them
for no other reason than because bravery for each
was most important: if Discord should plague two sluggish men
or war should come to unequally matched ones, as to Diomedes
with Lycian Glaucus, the lesser man would yield, and then,
with bribes distributed) with Brutus as praetor possessing
rich Asia, the duo of Rupilius and Persius fights, such that no
better a match was Bachius with Bithus. Into court
the keen men rush, each a great spectacle in himself.
Persius lays out his case; he provokes laughs from the entire
court; he praises Brutus and praises his company,
he names Brutus the sun of Asia and the beneficent stars
his companions—with the exception of Rex; that man came as
the Dog-star hostile to farmers: he [Persius] was rushing
like a wintry river by which the rare axe is carried.
Then, at the one flowing with great wit, the Praenestine
man throws back insults squeezed from the orchard, a tough
grape-picker, unconquerable, to whom a passerby often
had conceded after shouting out “Cuckoo” in a loud voice.
But the Greek, after he had been suffused in Italian vinegar,
Persius shouts: “In the name of the great gods, Brutus, I beg
you, who are accustomed to removing kings, why don't you
butcher this King? This, believe me, is in need of your service!

The poem, however, is more complex than the linear narrative it presents, a fact that Du Quesnay (1984), Henderson (1994), and Gowers (2006, 2012) have gone a long way in demonstrating by their political readings of the work and, likewise, Buchheit (1968) and Anderson (1972) by their

literary-critical explications.[70] The characters involved, the Homeric allusions, the silence of Brutus, the self-positioning of the speaker—all of these elements lend depth to an otherwise one-dimensional anecdote in which two parties contest a case before a judge whose ruling the reader never learns. Laughter plays an important role in this satire, one that becomes most apparent both through the explicit laughter that appears in v. 22 and through the laughter that is conspicuously absent in the wake of the pun in the poem's concluding verses.

"The pun does the opposite of defusing tension," Gowers declares, but she stops short of explaining why the concluding pun of *Satires* 1.7 fails in this respect.[71] It is difficult to assert what the pun does or does not do when nothing follows the pun—when there is no record of its reception, neither groans nor giggles. The blank space, the "nothing," that follows Persius' pun is the ostensible reason for Gowers' observation, but she stops short of tying this "nothing" to the absence of laughter. Henderson, on the other hand, speaks to the point: "If there is to be a laugh, whether of appreciation or of derision, on whatever interpretation or refusal to interpret, the text has precisely been staged to get rid of it. Any smirks, groans, cackles, hoots, roars, brutific smiles come, *if* they come, from the reader."[72] The pun is an open-ended question, after which the poem is handed off to the reader to decide what response the final joke earns. If the reader decides to laugh, she does so at her own risk. The only release of tension assured by the text at the end of the narrative is ambiguous silence—a patch of blank space on the page before a piece of wood begins speaking at the beginning of *Satires* 1.8.[73]

Where laughter is expected, silence seems hardly ambiguous. The assertive formulation of Gowers' and Henderson's arguments is that the concluding pun of *Satires* 1.7 *creates* tension,

70 Buchheit (1968) 528, 542-553: "In [*Satires* 1.7] sind Homerparodie und Literarkritik besonders eindringlich verbunden" (542).
71 Gowers (2012) 251-2.
72 Henderson (1994) 157.
73 Anderson (1972) examines the similarities between *Satires* 1.7 and 1.8.

and it does so by way of the silence—the "not-laughter"—that follows it. Under day-to-day, non-literary circumstances, a joke that goes unacknowledged ultimately fails. If a stand-up comic's pun receives no **buh-duh-pish** from the house drummer, let alone laughs from the audience, she probably will not reuse that bit. Even a groan or a snort in response to a punning joke delivered among friends is preferable to silence. In this way, the lack of any evidence of internal audience reaction to the conclusion of *Satires* 1.7 could be meant to function as a critique, as if to say, "This particular wordplay should not be dignified with a response."

But Horatian satire does not offer the "day-to-day, non-literary circumstances" of a stand-up comic or of a typical conversation among friends, despite the conversational fiction espoused by the satirist. The laughter that is conspicuously absent from the poem's end should not be read against its expected context alone but alongside the rest of the poem, the poetic book, and the genre in which the book is written. Horace offers a poem that precludes laughter precisely when a reader would most expect to hear (or read) it, and he does so after having incorporated explicit laughter into the previous verses. This vacillating inclusion and exclusion of explicit laughter in *Satires* 1.7 raises some of the same questions discussed in the context of *Satires* 1.1, 1.4, and 1.10. Who is the addressee, who is the speaker, what is the satirist up to, and with or at whom are we supposed to laugh? Horace uses the ambiguity of laughter in *Satires* 1.7 not to answer these questions but to pose them in a new context.

The occasion of laughter that appears in the work occurs after the satire's participants (the litigants Rupilius Rex and Persius and the judge Brutus) have been introduced:

> *Persius exponit causam; ridetur ab omni*
> *conuentu; laudat Brutum laudatque cohortem,*
> *solem Asiae Brutum appellat stellasque salubris*
> *appellat comites excepto Rege; Canem illum,*
> *inuisum agricolis sidus, uenisse: ruebat*
> *flumen ut hibernum, fertur quo rara securis.*

Persius lays out his case; he provokes laughs from the entire
court; he praises Brutus and praises his company,
he names Brutus the sun of Asia and the beneficent stars
his companions—with the exception of Rex; that man came as
the Dog-star hostile to farmers: he was rushing
like a wintry river by which the rare axe is carried.

The simile in vv. 26-27 is difficult to parse because the action between the axe and river is unclear,[74] but the verses that precede the simile, with their parallel syntaxes and repetitions of key words, are simple enough as a vivid narration of past events. Persius is the subject of every present-tense verb in vv. 22-25 until the clause of indirect discourse in vv. 25-26 wherein he makes Rupilius Rex (*illum*) the accusative subject of the infinitive *uenisse* and equates Rex's arrival with that of the agriculturally-foreboding star Sirius. Persius then resumes his role as subject of *ruebat*, although the tense of the verb (imperfect rather than present) marks this as an intrusion by the storyteller rather than a vivid narration of the events themselves.[75]

From a narrative standpoint, the verbs are deceptively complex, and the verb of laughing is especially troublesome. Although Gowers asserts that *ridetur* is an impersonal passive that allows the laughter "to continue throughout the contest," she also angles the laughter proleptically toward Persius: "The audience laughs at the sycophancy of 24-7 before the reader has a chance to hear why."[76] I agree with some, but not all, of Gowers' points. The laughter in v. 22 is proleptic and metacommunicatively charged (and thus applicable to the entire contest),[77] but if the audience is laughing *at* the sycophancy of Persius, I do not see why the verb should be

74 Rudd's (1997) 30 translation refers to a "wild ravine where an axe but seldom reaches." Gowers (2012) 259 likewise suggests an involved interaction between an axe, the river, and its surrounding woods: "[A] woodsman's axe is 'rarely borne' either because the ravine is inaccessible and dangerous or because a torrent would uproot trees on its way and make woodcutting unnecessary." I imagine that the axe has been left near the banks of the river by a heedless woodsman, and the flooding river is strong enough to have swept up an object as heavy as an axe in its torrent.

75 Cf. *habebat* at the beginning of the satire (v. 4).

76 Gowers (2012) 258-9. Kiessling and Heinze (1961) 134 think it exceedingly unlikely that Horace would use the impersonal passive with *a*: "Ein unpersönliches Passiv aber mit *a* dürfte im Lateinischen überhaupt kaum je vorkommen."

77 See Chapter 2 for a comparable argument with regard to the laughter at the beginning of Vergil's *Eclogue* 3.

read impersonally. Persius is the subject of the verbs on either side of *ridetur* (*exponit* in v. 22 and *laudat* in v. 23), and he is the implicit subject of *ridetur*. I do not, however, interpret the verb as indicating derision. Persius and his words are the stimulus to laughter, but he is not being laughed *at*.[78] He controls the laughter, just as he controls the speech before and after the verb of laughing appears.

Any conclusive explanation for the laughter is, as usual, difficult to identify. Perhaps Persius elicits admiring laughs from the audience for rhetorical flourishes that survive embedded in the speaker's account of the episode; the repetition of *laudat* and *appellat* in parallel references to Brutus and his cohort may mimic word repetition in Persius' own speech.[79] Likewise, the imagery of the stars that is cast as praise for Brutus and then skillfully inverted to cut against Rupilius Rex is credited to Persius through indirect discourse. Or perhaps Persius provokes laughter because of his torrential outpouring of speech, flecks of spittle flying like the whitewater of the rushing river to which he is compared. Perhaps, if one follows Gowers' reading, the laughter is at Persius' expense in response to his obsequious opening. The speaker does not identify the specific trigger to laughter, but it can hardly be coincidental that Persius' wit receives mention moments after he finishes speaking:

> *tum Praenestinus salso multoque fluenti* 28
> *expressa arbusto regerit conuicia* [. . .].
>
> Then, at the one flowing with great wit, the Praenestine 28
> man throws back insults squeezed from the orchard [. . .].

The narrator returns to fluid imagery to describe Persius as the "one flowing with great wit," and so both occurrences of laughter-related vocabulary in *Satires* 1.7 are applied to Persius. Unless

78 For a similar use of the passive *ridetur*, cf. *De or.* 2.284, wherein incongruity is recognized as a source of laughter without being a specific object of ridicule. For contrast, cf. the blundering *citharoedus* who is laughed at (*ridetur*) in *A.P.* 356 in Chapter 1.

79 Buchheit (1968) 543 refers to Persius' Asiatic style—"asianischem Stil".

the speaker is referring ironically to Persius' wit,[80] Persius plays the role of the "funny guy." He is also characterized and narrated as the poem's protagonist, the avenger (*sit . . . ultus* in v. 2) granted the first and last word in the internal debate.[81] His punning exclamation in vv. 32-34 is the only quoted speech in the poem, and its appearance in the concluding verses frames it as the fulfillment of the revenge forecast in the opening verses of the poem. After Persius speaks, the story is over. The addressees have been given what they were promised.

The technique of concluding a potentially laugh-worthy anecdote with a punning final line is not unique to Horace. Recall Catullus' c. 53, discussed in Chapter 2 in my introduction to the concept of metacommunication:[82]

risi nescio quem modo e corona,
qui, cum mirifice Vatiniana
meus crimina Caluus explicasset,
admirans ait haec manusque tollens,
'di magni, salaputium disertum!' 5

I just laughed at someone from the crowd
who, when my Calvus had wonderfully
set forth the crimes of Vatinius,
raised his hands in admiration and said the following:
"Great gods, what a literary widdle wit-ster." 5

Catullus' short anecdote permits considerably less "coloring" in its 5 lines than Horace's satire of 34 verses, but situational and structural parallels between the two poems are immediately apparent: a legal setting, two figures in conflict, an audience collective, an outburst of laughter, an unnamed addressee, and a direct quotation at poem's end. A key difference, other than that the punning speaker in Catullus' poem is an anonymous spectator rather than a participant in the trial, resides in the different manner in which laughter is deployed in each poem. The speaker of

80 Buchheit (1968) shies away from an ironic reading and identifies sympathy in Horace's approach to Persius: "Wenn vorher V. 31 griechisches Salz und italische Schärfe einander gegenübergestellt werden, ist Horazens Sympathie trotz gewisser Einschränkungen auf der Seite des *sal Graecum*" (546).

81 Of the two litigants, Persius first sets out his case (in vv. 21-26, treated in the previous pages) and then delivers the poem-ending pun in vv. 32-34.

82 See Chapter 2, pp. 85-97.

c. 53 confesses laughter for himself in the poem's first word, and in doing so, he shares it with any addressee who identifies and laughs with him. The speaker of Horace's *Satires* 1.7, on the other hand, claims no share in the laughter incorporated into his narrative. These differing approaches to laughter offer insight into Horace's satiric voice in *Satires* 1.7 and throughout the *Liber Sermonum*.

The addressee *qua* reader of Catullus' c. 53 may laugh because she understands the pun in v. 5, because she identifies with the speaker ("Catullus"), or even because she adopts a playfully deprecating attitude toward stories about Calvus. Whatever her reason (and those I have listed do not exhaust the options), the poem makes it possible for her to laugh without exposing herself excessively. When she laughs, she has, at the very least, a single, confirmed ally in the poetic speaker himself. As for Horace's *Satires* 1.7, the laughter present in (vv. 25) the poem and absent from its conclusion has various potential trajectories, some of which risk alienating the reader who shares in the laughter. The reader groups herself with *omnis conuentus* (vv. 21-22) if she laughs in response to Persius' opening argument, but she must determine for herself whether they are laughing *at* or *because of* Persius. The satire only informs her that audience members *within* the poem found something in the proceedings laugh-worthy. However happy she may be to be laughing amidst company, she is offered few clues as the make-up of this company and even fewer as the reasons for their laughter.

As for the satire's abrupt conclusion, I have already drawn attention to the fact that the text confirms nothing but silence following Persius' pun. On the one hand, this textual silence could be a measured attempt on the part of the narrator to solicit an audience response by crescendoing to a punchline—ending with a bang rather than watering down the joke with an explanation. On the other, the silence could also represent the satirist's implicit critical assessment of the pun. Consider, for example, how various, potential reader responses could

shape and be shaped by the satire's conclusion. If one believes that Persius' pun aims for laughter, a laugh elicited from the reader at this point would seem to ally her with Persius. Even a groan acknowledges the pun as a pun while allowing the reader to give voice to her reservations about Persius' punning inabilities. These responses empower Persius in his capacity as a joker by allowing his wordplay to remain playful. A different reader response would be silence, and this one is sanctioned by the (lack of) text. In the same way that the text's lack of acknowledgement of the pun is ambiguous and potentially critical, silence as a reader response communicates the same indeterminacies, including the additional question of whether the reader "got" the joke at all.[83]

There remains a reader response to the pun that I believe would be even less desirable than silence: scornful laughter. An outside observer might easily confuse the reader who embodies this response with the reader who finds Persius' pun successful. Both readers are laughing, but their reasons for laughing are entirely different. One reader laughs in recognition of the pun's success. The other derides the *weakness* of the pun and, by extension, the entire narrative frame in which it is presented. The butt of the joke in the latter case is not Brutus, Persius, or Rupilius Rex but the joke itself—and any audience so gauche as to find the episode worth laughing at in the first place.[84]

One might shy away from such an ironic reading of the satire. After all, it destabilizes the poem at its conclusion and casts the satirist in a manipulative narrative role: "Have you heard this story? It sounds like it could be worth a laugh (and some people even laugh in it)," he begins, before declaring afterward, "It's not though, and if you laughed, the joke is on you!"

83 If commentaries are any indication, I suspect that this response is the prevailing one among modern readers, many of whom require an explanation of the joke. I wonder if a public recitation of a good translation—perhaps one that substitutes modern names and figures for the actors—would yield different audience responses than private reading.

84 It seems to me that scornful laughter would only be a viable response at the conclusion of the poem when the reader can rest assured that no further twists remain.

Elements of the very framing of *Satires* 1.7 nevertheless accommodate this more ironic role for the satirist. For example, the narration of the anecdote forcibly assimilates the reader to the rabble among whom, according to our speaker, the story has already been circulated: the bleary-eyed men who gossip at the pharmacy and the barbershop (v. 3). The reader does not even need to laugh in order to be counted as a part of this group; simply knowing the story makes her part of the confabulating *cognoscenti*. She may derive some comfort from a belief that the speaker, by sharing the story with her, does not initially presume her to be among the gossips, but the speaker also offers her no opportunity to avoid joining their ranks.

To laugh in the middle, after the end, or in response to any other part of the poem, is to participate in the gossip—to cast a vote for or against Persius, for or against the audience, even for or against Brutus (and, by extension, Tarquinius Superbus[85]/Julius Caesar/Octavian). And this vote must be cast without any clear indication of for or against whom the satirist himself would vote, or whether he would vote at all. While the first-person narrator of Catullus' c. 53 confesses his own laughter (*risi*) in the opening word of the poem and speaks as if an eye-witness to the events, the reader of *Satires* 1.7 receives no comparable assurance of the speaker's laughter. The satirist writes himself into the poem only fleetingly in v. 2 and v. 9 (*opinor* and *redeo*) and never confirms a first-hand account of the episode, however much his editorializing implies one. For all the reader knows, the speaker is relaying and embellishing a story that he heard when he received his most recent haircut. Horace cultivates and maintains a cautious distance from laughter, first, when he writes ambiguous laughter into the poem and then, when he denies textually-confirmed laughter from the poem's end.

The cautious approach to laughter modeled in *Satires* 1.7 reflects a trend witnessed

85 Countless fine threads bind the satires together. Tarquinius' name appears in vv. 12-13 of *Satires* 1.6, although Horace there focuses on Laevinus' role in the expulsion of the king.

elsewhere in Horace's *Liber Sermonum*: the satirist routinely stands aloof from the laughter he narrates as well as the laughter he potentially solicits. The preceding section on laughter's prevalence in Horace's programmatic *apologiae* explored several instances in which he aligns laughter with his satirical project without confessing to laughter himself—and without *really* claiming that laughter is his objective. Similarly, outside of signposted programmatic passages, the *Liber Sermonum* presents occasions of laughter in which the speaker obscures and minimizes his own participation. He certainly never exclaims, "I laughed," in the way the Catullan speaker of c. 53 does.[86] Laughter is powerful, polyvalent, and potentially pernicious, and the satirist handles it like an explosive that is best directed away from himself. He typically plants it as a textual booby-trap and waits for a laughing reader to trip the wire and puzzle out the consequences for herself. But the satirist rarely sets his own feet and confesses to laughing himself. To do so would require him to take a position that might require defending. On the rare occasions that he handles laughter personally, he does so either conditionally or with the help of discerning friends.

Horace's conditional first-person laughter is treated in the previous examination of *Satires* 1.4. In *Satires* 1.5 Horace laughs twice in the company of his traveling companions (*ridentes* in v. 35 and *ridemus* in v. 57), and these are the only two other occasions on which the satirist admits to personal laughter in the collection. The travelogue poem is among the best known in Horace's first book of satires, and it has been treated at length by many scholars. I content myself to remark briefly upon the occasions of laughter in the poem and otherwise direct curious readers to Gowers' treatments of the poem in her 1994 article, "Horace, *Satires* 1.5 an inconsequential journey," and her 2012 commentary.

Some basic orientation to the poem is nevertheless helpful. Horace recounts a journey in

86 *Illudo* appears in 1.4.139 and *ludo* in 1.10.37, but I do not interpret these terms as being gelastically loaded.

which he accompanied Maecenas to Brundisium for a meeting "regarding great things" (*magnis de rebus* in v. 28), but political details are eclipsed throughout the narrative by Horace's personal interests. The first fit of laughter overcomes Horace shortly after his high-powered contacts arrive on the scene.[87] Maecenas, Cocceius, and Capito Fonteius arrive together in vv. 31-33, just moments after Horace smears ointment on his ailing eyes—as if to ensure that he will see as little of the big show as possible. Within three verses of the appearance of these well-known names in the poem, Horace is eagerly speaking in the first-person plural of "our" collective movements and likeminded derision for small-town politics:

> *Fundos Aufidio Lusco praetore libenter*
> *linquimus, insani ridentes praemia scribae,* 35
> *praetextam et latum clauum prunaeque uatillum.*
>
> Fundi, where Aufidius Luscus is praetor, we happily
> leave behind, laughing at the trappings of the crazy scribe, 35
> with his toga praetexta and wide band and coal shovel.

If the satirist is going to laugh haughtily, he now has the proper entourage to do so. He is in the company of the movers and shakers of contemporary Roman politics, men traveling for business, not leisure. They are high enough on the social and political ladder that they can laugh at a local mayor and his blue-collar customs, and who is Horace to abstain? Yet the connections between Aufidius Luscus and Horace are such that one wonders if Horace may have laughed a little too loudly.[88] Gowers notes that "the *nomen* Aufidius (cf. Aufidus, H.'s childhood river: 1.58 [. . .]) and the *cognomen* Luscus, following 20 *lippus*, make this municipal dignitary an alter ego for H. from his restricted past."[89] Tack on a reference to a professional writer (*scriba*, v. 35) and the (self-)portrait is sketched all the more vividly.

87 Horace is not alone before this point, but the only evidence of his rhetorical traveling companion Heliodorus after his naming in v. 2 are scattered first-person plural verbs, nominative plural adjectives, and personal pronouns (e.g., v. 5 *hoc iter ignaui diuisimus, altius ac nos [. . .]*).

88 Taking the verse in sequence, the reader may wonder at first whether *insani*, sandwiched between *linquimus* and *ridentes*, describes the subjects' frenzied laughter.

89 Gowers (2012) 195.

The second occasion of laughter occurs when the group, augmented by the arrival of Vergil, Varius, and Plotius, is lodging with Cocceius, whose villa affords them a superior view of the *cauponae* in Caudium. This occasion of laughter in *Satires* 1.5 resembles that of 1.7 and appears within a mock-epic exchange, although this one is lengthier and more detailed than its successor in the collection.[90] The verbal *agon* is recounted in vv. 51-69 complete with an invocation of the Muse (v. 53) and Odyssean allusions to a distinguishing scar (*cicatrix* in v. 60) and a cyclops (v. 63).[91] The speaker quotes the opening attack of the *scurra* Sarmentus against the "cocky" (*Cicirrus*) Messius before narrating the audience's collective response in a vivid present tense: "We laugh" (*ridemus* in v. 57). He thus claims a share in the laughter, again participating in the laughter as a plurality with his highly-esteemed friends, and again leaving himself only as exposed as they are.[92]

The stakes of the quarrel are admittedly low, and so too is the risk posed to the satirist by his laughter, both because of his accompanists and the circumstances. In the earliest part of the exchange, the insulted Messius "accepts" Sarmentus' abuse (*accipio* in v. 58), and by horsing around in a mime of the insult, he participates "affably" in the slight.[93] The *ridemus* of v. 57 also specifies no object—no recipient of derision. Sandwiched as it is between the initial insult of Messius and his accommodating response, the laughter contributes to a general atmosphere of playfulness. Unlike the "great business affairs" that compel Persius' litigation in *Satires* 1.7 (*permagna negotia* in v. 4), the insults of 1.5 are explicitly identified as jokes (*permulta iocatus* in v. 62) and the reasons for the contest left undeclared.

90 The narrative structures also differ. The back-and-forth of 1.5 begins with quoted speech and transitions to indirect discourse, the opposite of what occurs in 1.7.

91 Barnes (1988) 59 n. 12.

92 The *nos* of v. 50, fast on the heels of references to Maecenas and Vergil in v. 48, is sufficient reason to include Horace's companions among those laughing. For his personal regard for all of them, cf. vv. 39-44 and v. 93.

93 Gowers (2012) 202 sets forth a potential interpretation of Messius' "affability" alongside two less convincing takes on his response.

The exchange between Sarmentus and Messius is an inset of a larger story, and the speaker offers a closing assessment of the episode in v. 70: "In short, we prolong that dinner pleasantly"—*prorsus iucunde cenam producimus illam*. The verbal duel is treated as part of the dinner entertainment, after which the satirist and his fellow "laughers" stroll through the remainder of the narrative unblemished (but for a wet dream that stains the satirist's belly in vv. 84-85 and some friendly tears he sheds when Varius separates from the company in v. 93). The final occasion of laughter in vv. 97-98 of *Satires* 1.5 marks a return to the caution Horace elsewhere observes in his satires. "Laughs and jokes" (*risusque iocusque*, v. 98) are provoked by a specific city (*Gnatia*, v. 97) through which the travelers pass on the way to the poem's conclusion, but they are neither claimed by nor assigned to anyone in particular.

Reckford (1999) draws upon the mock-epic episode to consider what it may indicate about Horatian satire more generally:

> If the little *agon* is a microcosm of the larger satire, then we may become alerted to the truth that *satire is itself a game*, a most civilized and civilizing game, to be sure, yet in the end only a game, played out within the bounds of a (for now) protected literary and social playground. But outside, in the unmapped larger world of politics and war, can any limits hold? Virgil asks similar questions in his *Eclogues*. His sheltered, hypercivilized world of pastoral, and of poetry and friendship, has an almost Orphic power to transform nature, yet is finally vulnerable to the invasive passions of love and war and the displacements of history. So too with satire. Can Horace's game, however well played, really exorcize the forces of aggressiveness and violence? How long can his mild satiric laughter, his "educated mockery," keep them at bay?[94]

In focusing on this *agon*, Reckford has selected an episode in the *Liber Sermonum* in which the boundaries of the "game of satire" are particularly well defined: 1) the players are all willing, 2) gameplay is turn-based and fast moving, and 3) the stakes, although they initially seem high (*pugna* in v. 52 and v. 56), are low enough that the outcome can be pleasant (*iucunde* in v. 70).[95] In all three of these ways, Horace models elements of the experience one may have while

94 Reckford (1999) 543. Emphases are his own.
95 The notion of "play" is a concept I treat in Chapter 2 and one to which I return in Chapter 5.

reading his own satires. First, as the speaker explains in *Satires* 1.4.73, he shares his work with no one but friends (*nec recito cuiquam nisi amicis*), so an audience only encounters his creations willingly. Second, the medium is the rapid back-and-forth of speech and conversation (*sermo* in *Satires* 1.4.48). Third, the style oscillates between high and low, epic in its hexametrical form, quotidian in content, but with a declared objective of pleasing the audience.[96]

One implicit extension of these parallels between the *agon* of *Satires* 1.5 and Horace's wider satiric project is that the activity of the satirist becomes the spectacle itself.[97] If we are the audience (rather than Horace) and the *Sermones* themselves are the agonistic exchange, Horace plays the roles of Sarmentus and Messius simultaneously. He is the willing *scurra* (v. 52) as well as the *scriba* (v. 66), the scarred cock (*cicatrix* in v. 60 and *Cicirrus* in v. 52) and the rustic Cyclops (*pastorem [. . .] Cyclopa* in v. 63).[98] And should the reader find herself at a loss as to how to respond to the show, Horace and his companions model the proper response: laughter.

Thus, despite the satirist's caution in laughing only in the company of powerful companions in *Satires* 1.5, the two occasions on which he confesses to laughter in the *Liber Sermonum* portray him laughing at, or because of, figures who bear striking resemblances to

---

96 Cf. *Satires* 1.10.84-90:

ambitione relegata te dicere possum,
Pollio, te, Messalla, tuo cum fratre, simulque 85
uos, Bibule et Serui, simul his te, candide Furni,
conpluris alios, doctos ego quos et amicos
prudens praetereo, ***quibus haec, sint qualiacumque,***
adridere uelim*, doliturus, si placeant spe*
deterius nostra. 90

With flattery set aside, I am able to speak of you,
Pollio, you, Messalla, with your brother, and at the same time 85
you, Bibulus and Servus, and with them you, pure Furnius,
and many others, learned men and friends whom I
prudently omit, **to whom I would like these things, whatever**
they may be, to be worth a laugh. I would be pained if these men
were pleased less than our hope. 90

97 Oliensis (1998) 29 is attuned to the "satiric" elements of the inset *agon*. Gowers (2012) 200 observes that Horace "unearths double roots for verse satire" in the course of the exchange.

98 Gowers (2012) 200, 203 points to *scriba* in v. 66 as a similarity between Sarmentus and Horace.

himself: the bumpkin scribe in v. 35 and the two laugh-provoking buffoons in v. 57. By way of these illustrations of "personal" laughter, Horace reminds us of how unstable and prickly laughter can be. A laugh that begins at another's expense or even as a source of shared pleasure can abruptly change direction and end up directed at the laugher himself.

To return to the analogy with which I began the chapter, I have examined in the previous pages what I consider to be a particularly influential collection of pieces in the generic puzzle of Horace's satire: laughter. The vocabulary for laughter and the risible recurs throughout the *Liber Sermonum*, and although the satirist draws attention to how he relegates laughter to the edges of his puzzle, it soon becomes apparent that the genre is bounded—even defined—by laughter and the satirist's own relationship with it. Laughter appears at moments of tension between the claimed "conversational" status of the compositions and the reality of the finely-tuned, metrical poems. Laughter also appears in both the attacks on and defenses of satire; insofar as the satirist is responsible for relaying both of these, he doubly confirms that laughter is a fixture within the genre. Laughter even seems to appear right in front of the reader when it is conspicuously absent. Or it appears right behind the person who sent it confidently in the opposite direction.

It is these varied and variable experiences of laughter that I believe reflect the reader's experience in Horace's first book of *Satires*. Any attempt to interpret a *sermo* of Horace entails a particular brand of foolhardiness. Each poem opens itself up to multi-layered interpretations, and the reader, in the very act of engaging the text, becomes a potential target of the satire. Furthermore, in advocating a "hard line" interpretation of any of Horace's satires—of restricting the laughter in any one way, a reader runs the additional risk of diluting the complexity of the poetry. Throughout the *Liber Sermonum*, laughter is an indicator of instability as well as a destabilizing force. In other words, laughter, in its many shapes and sizes and puzzling locations, looks like Horatian satire itself.

CHAPTER 5: GELASTIC SYMPATHY

VERGIL'S *ECLOGUES*

In *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry*, David Halperin describes the challenges that arise from an attempt to define the pastoral genre:

> Pastoral presents a special problem for genre theory because its distinguishing features belong almost exclusively to the category of 'inner form.' The doctrine of genres admits of classification according to tone or purpose in certain special cases (satire is another example), 'but the critical problem will then be to find the *other* dimension,' the specific literary structure or structures appropriate to the expression of a specific attitude [. . .].[1]

As Halperin hints, the "special problem" that he believes pastoral to present for genre theory is not unique to the genre under discussion; both satire and pastoral are "special cases."[2] The characteristic features of these genres reside in their tone or purpose because "outer form" (e.g., meter) does not distinguish them sufficiently from other genres. Whether laughter is a "literary structure" or "a specific attitude," a "tone" or a "purpose" (I might be tempted to call it all of these), I assert in the pages that follow that laughter is a genre-specific feature of Vergil's *Eclogues*.

Let us return for a moment to the genre jigsaw puzzle I describe in the introduction to Part 2. Remember that in this puzzle of genre, each feature of a poem, external or internal, easily articulated or nearly ineffable, is a piece. There exist a point-of-view piece, a metrical piece, a tone piece, a register-of-diction piece, and countless other pieces representing various aspects of a work, well-defined and less-concrete alike. When all of the pieces are assembled, the final composition offers a portrait of the genre as a whole. Yet after the puzzle is complete, the task of identifying individual pieces may prove exceedingly difficult. The metrical piece in Classical

1 Halperin (1983) 33-34, citing Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* (1962).

2 Both pastoral and satire are sometimes identified as "modes" rather than "genres." See Halperin (1983) 34: "The recent trend in criticism has therefore emphasized literary manners or means instead of kinds: it has tended to substitute the literary *mode* for the literary *genre*." For satire as a "mode", cf. Griffin (1994) 4 (and *passim*).

Greek and Latin genres remains nonetheless eye-catching in size and shape.[3] In Vergil's *Eclogues*, the metrical piece resembles that of every other genre that makes use of dactylic hexameter (such as Lucretian didactic and Lucilian satire), but the primary resonance remains the Homeric *epos* piece. Some believe that pastoral's metrical piece carries a distinct marking, namely, the bucolic diaeresis. The marking is not unique to pastoral, however: the bucolic diaeresis is observed with considerable frequency in Homeric epic as well as Callimachean epigram.[4] The reader of Vergilian pastoral, like the reader of the Horatian *sermones*, is thus confronted with an incongruity. In the same puzzle as the "*epos* piece" appear the "rustic setting piece," the "low-brow diction piece" (already familiar to the puzzler of Roman satire), the "agonistic play piece," and other assorted—and decidedly un-*epos*—pieces. The juxtaposition itself, as discussed in the foregoing treatment of Horace's *Satires*, could very well provoke laughter, but this alone is not how literary laughter becomes a distinguishing feature of Vergil's *Eclogues*. To better understand the role laughter performs within the *Eclogues*, we must first consider how laughter is used by Vergil's generic predecessor, the archetypal bucolic poet Theocritus.

Halperin endeavors to distinguish between bucolic poetry ("bucolic" being the term Theocritus uses to refer to poetic production in specific *Idylls*) and pastoral poetry.[5] He identifies pastoral as a Vergilian tradition that has continuously refashioned and redeployed itself throughout late antiquity and early modernity to survive still, albeit in somewhat altered form, in modern literature and criticism. His conclusion is that Theocritus invented bucolic poetry, while

3 One might suppose that these pieces can even be assembled in a variety of ways, but so long as the same pieces are used, the genre remains essentially the same. Then again, perhaps a new author substitutes pieces or entire sections, with fresh pieces introduced, old pieces set aside. Thus new life, new ideas, and new practices are injected into the genre.

4 Bassett (1905).

5 The verb βουκολιάζομαι appears in *Id*. 5.44 and 60, *Id*. 7.36, and *Id*. 9.1 and 5.

Vergil, through his reception of Theocritus, popularized pastoral.[6] The distinction has not gained traction, as the Oxford Classical Dictionary entry for "bucolic" makes clear ("See PASTORAL POETRY, GREEK; PASTORAL POETRY, LATIN."[7]), nor do I maintain it in the following pages. But Halperin's reasons for differentiating between Theocritus' and Vergil's creations are understandable—Vergil casts a long shadow, and the Greek poet and his budding genre fare well when freed from it. But the role of reception in the delineation of nascent generic boundaries cannot be ignored, especially in a study that focuses on the recipient. If a reader should wish to divorce Vergil's *Eclogues* from a generic association with Theocritus, Vergil himself invites the comparison, through allusions to the Theocritean poet (e.g., *Ecl.* 4.1: "Sicilian Muses, let us sing slightly greater things"—*Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus*) and to his poetic creations (e.g., the opening lines of *Ecl*. 3 and *Id*. 4).[8] Frances Muecke states the point concisely: "When a genre already exists the various demands imposed by the writer's choice of it are known, both to him and his audience, but when it is in its earliest stage what is typical of it is not so obvious."[9]

I argue that Vergil interpreted the presence of laughter in Theocritus' *Idylls* as something "typical" of the genre. In the course of observing this typicality (i.e., by writing laughter into his *Eclogues*), he may also have played a pivotal role in making laughter a "demand" for future writers in the genre. In the pages that follow, I focus on the use of laughter in Theocritus' *Idylls* 7, 11, and 1—with a brief examination of laughter's appearance in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* 5—before I turn to Vergil's integration of laughter into the fabric of the *Eclogues* themselves.

---

6 In his closing pages, Halperin (1983) 254 boldly offers a definition of bucolic poetry "as it was invented by Theocritus," wherein he remarks upon peculiarities of "theme," "form," and "language" that feature in Theocritus' poetry. I believe that all of the features he identifies are "pieces" in the generic puzzles of Theocritean and Vergilian pastoral.

7 *OCD* s.v. bucolic.

8 *Ecl.* 3 closely resembles *Id.* 4 in the first 6 verses. See Chapter 2, p. 103 n. 32.

9 Muecke (1975) 170. See also Gutzwiller (1991) 3-19 and Hunter (2006) 263-4.

SECTION IA: THE GRINNING GOATHERD: FANTASY, REALITY, AND CULTIVATED AMBIGUITY IN THEOCRITUS' PASTORAL *IDYLLS*

In *Idyll* 7 of Theocritus, the narrator Simichidas tells of his chance-encounter with the goatherd Lycidas. In the verses before Lycidas first addresses him, Simichidas describes the goatherd's bearing: καί μ' ἀτρέμας εἶπε σεσαρώς / ὄμματι μειδιόωντι, γέλως δέ οἱ εἴχετο χείλευς—"And he addressed me calmly, grinning with a smiling eye, and a laugh played on his lips" (vv. 19-20). A. S. Gow observes that the vocabulary used in this description typically suggests malice (σεσαρώς from σαίρειν) and is often indicative of fake laughter, yet he concludes that Lycidas is simply "amused" when he addresses Simichidas and the fellow travelers "with friendly mockery."[10] Others detect jollity and benevolence in this interchange,[11] while still others observe "a certain superior detachment"[12] or "calm superiority"[13] in Lycidas' approach and address of Simichidas. In the remainder of the *Idyll*, the two singer-poets exchange songs and appear to part ways amicably after Lycidas gives Simichidas his staff, a gesture the narrator interprets as an act of poetic friendship.

The varied scholarly interpretations of Lycidas' comportment as he approaches Simichidas in *Idyll* 7 suggest that the laughter and smiling in this passage are fundamentally unclear in tone, a reflection of ambiguity both in the gelastic vocabulary and in the narrative context. The first term for laughter appearing in the passage, σεσαρώς, throws the reader something of a curveball. The primary LSJ definition for σαίρειν—"part the lips and show the closed teeth; grin"—lists several textual citations before citing *Id*. 7.19 at the end of the entry with the comment "but also without any bad sense."[14] Why "without any bad sense"? No

10 Gow II (1954) 137.
11 Crane (1987) 167.
12 Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) 134.
13 Hunter (1999) 157. Hunter also hypothesizes that "Lykidas' smile is the poet's recognition" of a limitation of the "metaphorical code" inherent in bucolic poetry (148).
14 LSJ s.v. σαίρω n.1; Chaintraine (1968) s.v. σέσηρα.

evidence is offered to support the exception. The modern-day reader of the *Idyll* is presented with a choice. She can take the words in 7.19-20 at their prevailing lexical value (ignoring the note on σαίρειν specific to *Id.* 7) and picture Lycidas grinning insincerely or condescendingly, but she might do well to ask whether such insincerity is reconcilable with the words and actions attributed to Lycidas later in the poem. After all, the men seem to part ways on good terms. Alternatively, she might choose to take the exception noted in LSJ under advisement and interpret Lycidas' demeanor as being "without any bad sense," like the laughs and smiles of a friend or patron, but she is then left to wonder why Theocritus uses the terminology—σαίρειν in particular—that he does.

One might consider this confusion of how to interpret Lycidas' laughing, smiling appearance in vv. 19-20 of *Idyll* 7 to be evidence of a potential failure—a failure to adequately define the "feel" of the poem. Could they instead be evidence of a particular strength?[15] What if we regard Theocritus' deployment of laughter in *Idyll* 7 as a successful cultivation of ambiguity, an invitation extended to the reader to make a choice, to interpret, and thus, in a sense, to participate in the poem? I propose in the following pages that the persistent ambiguity of the vocabulary for laughter in *Idyll* 7, the imbalance in the attribution of laughter throughout poem, and laughter's role in the unresolved mystery of Lycidas' identity all contribute to a tone of ambiguity and uncertainty that aligns with other fantastic aspects of the bucolic genre. I then briefly consider how laughter may be seen to establish a tone of ambiguity elsewhere in Theocritus' bucolic poems.

Little need be said about the ambiguity of the general vocabulary for laughter; I treat the subject in some detail in my introduction, and I suspect it will be familiar to English speakers

15 In his preface to *Genres and Readers* (1994), Conte observes, "Polysemy arises from the poets' strength, not from the historically determined readers' limitations" (*xix*).

who, when recounting an interaction, might feel compelled to distinguish between laughter *at* and laughter *with* an interlocutor, whether by choosing different terms or by emphasizing the prepositions. To be clear, I am here thinking not about the action of laughing but about attempts to describe or narrate the behavior of laughter in words. If one intends to describe psychological motivation, saying that someone "laughed" is considerably more vague than saying "she cackled" or "he giggled."

Theocritus' narration of ambiguous laughter in *Idyll* 7 warrants closer consideration, primarily because the author selects a negatively-charged term for laughter—σαίρειν, only to render its meaning ambiguous in his broader contextualization of it. The verb σαίρειν and participle σεσαρώς regularly indicate a movement of the lips that is bitter, sardonic, deviant, and ostensibly motivated by bad humor—that is, in every text but *Idyll* 7. The "bad sense" of σαίρειν alluded to in LSJ is even preserved elsewhere in the Theocritean corpus; the term appears in *Idyll* 5.116 and *Idyll* 20.14, and in both citations a negative (deviant or cruel) sense is retained. But in *Idyll* 7, the ongoing interaction between Simichidas and Lycidas bears no marks of bitterness and no indication of enmity, and thus the semantic charge of σαίρειν is called into question. The prevailing (positive—or, at least, *not* negative) tone of the poem becomes an indicator of the term's ambiguity. However, it is important to note that the ambiguity becomes evident only as the narrative unfolds. When a fluent reader first encounters σαίρειν in v. 19, she has no reason to assign any sense to the term other than its typical (negative) one—the same sense the word carries when it appears elsewhere in Theocritus.

The tension between the prevailing meaning of σαίρειν and the tone of the remainder of *Idyll* 7 deprives the term of a bad sense but stops far short of endowing it with a good one. So is there a particular moment when the ambiguous sense of σαίρειν gains traction and the old, "bad"

sense slips away? Perhaps when the other terms for laughter appear? If so, the shift in sense does not occur by virtue of any clear, positive charge conveyed by γέλως or μειδιόωντι, the two other terms for laughter and smiling that describe Lycidas in v. 20. Because γελᾶν and its nominal form γέλως depend upon context to establish a positive or negative tone, the fact that σεσαρώς (σαίρειν) appears in close proximity to γέλως when Lycidas approaches Simichidas does not lend additional color.[16] The other term appearing in this passage—μειδιόωντι—also fails to temper the otherwise "bad" connotation of σαίρειν. μειδιᾶν is defined in LSJ simply as the verb "smile" or "grin," where a grin indicates a more sinister disposition than a smile, even when there may be no physical distinction between the two expressions.[17] In short, both μειδιᾶν and γέλως derive their tone—good or bad—from their context. The final detail in Simichidas' description of Lycidas when they first meet pertains to the curious *location* of laughter in v. 20: "laughter was hanging from his (Lycidas') lips"—γέλως δέ οἱ εἴχετο χείλευς. What does this mean? The middle-verb εἴχετο renders the description particularly difficult to imagine. It is possible that the laughter is not actually vocalized but is rather *perceived* as "clinging" to Lycidas' lips—like a visual laugh. Or the γέλως may be vocalized as a normal laugh that somehow draws attention to Lycidas' lips. The second interpretation has the advantage of maintaining the distinction between a laugh and a smile.[18] In the end, no single term for, or description of, laughter and smiling in vv. 19-20 mitigates the negative sense of σαίρειν. As I suggest above, the shift in tone happens only gradually over the course of *Idyll* 7.[19] The strongest

16 These terms also appear together with an ostensibly negative sense in Plutarch's *Moralia*, 223b-c: καὶ ὕστερον δὲ τῶν φρενῶν ἔξω γενόμενον δράξασθαί τινος μαχαιρίου καὶ αὑτὸν ἀνατεμεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν σφυρῶν ἕως ἐπὶ τοὺς καιρίους τόπους, καὶ οὕτως ἐκλιπεῖν τὸν βίον γελῶντα καὶ σεσηρότα ("And later, out of his mind, he grabbed a knife and cut himself open from his calf to his vital parts, and thus he departed life laughing and grinning [σεσηρότα]").

17 LSJ s.v. μειδιάω. See also the *OED* s.v. *grin* and *smile* and the discussion in the introduction, pp. 4-8.

18 See Halliwell (2008) 522-3 for his argument urging that "smile" is not a primary meaning of γελᾶν or its compounds.

19 Maybe the concentration of laughter-related vocabulary and the single-mindedness of the description of Lycidas set the semantic shift of σαίρειν in motion. The negatively-charged σαίρειν becomes another term for laughter

conclusion one might assert from the description of Lycidas in vv. 19-20 is that the narrator Simichidas is intent on describing him as a laughing, smiling figure who *may* have derisive or scornful motivations. Such a conclusion is supported by two more occasions on which the vocabulary of laughter is applied to Lycidas in *Idyll* 7.

The remaining two instances of Lycidas' laughter occur as participial forms of the verb γελᾶν. Lycidas is described as "having laughed sweetly," ἁδὺ γελάσσας, in v. 42 before speaking and then again in v. 128 before giving Simichidas his staff. The words appears in the same metrical *sedes* (following the bucolic diaeresis) in both verses, and the narrator highlights the recurrence by attaching ὡς πάρος ("as before") when the phrase appears in v. 128. The repetition of ἁδὺ γελάσσας here is an appropriate nod to the formulaic nature of the collocation in Homeric texts.[20] In *Le Rire et les larmes dans la littérature grecque* Dominique Arnould observes that Homeric uses of ἡδύ to modify laughter "indicate, first and foremost, the satisfaction of he who laughs: the laughter is sweet for the laugher." She refines the point: "If the laughter is sweet for the laugher, this is precisely because it assures and reassures his superiority."[21] In the *Odyssey* the suitors (collectively and individually) are said to laugh "sweetly" on several occasions when derision and assertions of superiority are implications of

in a mishmash of gelastic vocabulary. Rather than add any other words that confirm a negative attitude on Lycidas' behalf, the narrator Simichidas simply describes the goatherd as a smiling, laughing figure, even if he leaves the motivation of his laughter and smiling a mystery.

20 In Homer, the same combination of words appears in the same metrical *sedes* at *Il*. 11.378 and *Il*. 21..508. There are several other morphological variations pairing "sweetness" and "laughter" in Homer that utilize finite forms of γελᾶν and ἐκγελᾶν, e.g., *Od*. 20.358 where all the suitors laughed after Theoklymenos relates his vision: Ὣς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπ' αὐτῶι ἡδὺ γέλασσαν. That the suitors here "laughed sweetly" *at* (ἐπὶ) Theoklymenos strongly allows that the laughter can be sweet for the laugher and simultaneously charged with derision.

21 Arnould (1990) 164. She acknowledges that laughter can lack malice and even be sweet for the object of the laughter, but maintains that the primary charge of ἡδύ applies to the person who is laughing or smiling (165). Levine (1983) 104 views laughter as an indicator of claimed superiority and smiles as indicators of actual superiority: "The poet does not give the suitors any smiles of superiority because that expression is used only of characters *who are in fact superior*. Whereas laughter can occur in ironical situations, smiling is never used ironically."

their laughter.[22] In *Iliad* Book 21 v. 508, Zeus laughs sweetly when he hears Artemis' complaint of mistreatment at the hands of Hera. He does not seem simply to be asserting his own superiority (which is uncontested) but also to be comforting his daughter. Reading Lycidas' laughs in *Idyll* 7 with these Homeric echoes in mind does not reflect positively on the goatherd. On the one hand, he mimics a characteristically shameless and inhospitable behavior by the suitors. On the other, the implications of superiority and gentle condescension that the Iliadic Zeus' "sweet laughter" conveys lend a patronizing tone to Lycidas' laughter at Simichidas.

Two conclusions can now be articulated regarding the laughter Theocritus writes into *Idyll* 7. First, laughter in the poem is persistently ambivalent, in both sense and context. Beginning with σαίρειν in v. 19, every laugh and smile that appears in *Idyll* 7 carries a question with it. Is Lycidas being disingenuous? Playful? Condescending? Kind? Even when his laughter is explicitly described as sweet, it retains a bitter flavor from a Homeric intertext. A second conclusion pertains to the imbalance in the deployment of laughter in the poem. Except for a final optative of γελᾶν which is attributed to Demeter in the closing verses of the poem, the five remaining occasions of the vocabulary of laughter and smiling in *Idyll* 7 are ascribed to Lycidas. No words for laughter or smiling describe Simichidas, but Lycidas is surrounded in the text by omnipresent laughter. A reader might reasonably interpret this asymmetry as an indicator of dissonance in the characters' interaction, an interpretation that finds support in the ambiguous terms for laughter and smiling used throughout. The two conclusions reinforce one another.

One additional point warrants emphasizing: we experience the poem as a whole through the words of Simichidas. A reader's knowledge of Lycidas, from the goatherd's clothing to his

22 Crane (1987) 164 cites several examples of the suitors' laughter to support his assertion that under the stronger reading of ἡδὺ γελᾶν, "the laughter is *only* pleasant for the one who is laughing" (my emphasis). He also proposes a secondary reading under which ἡδύ is confined to the how the laughter is perceived. Arnould urges against this secondary reading (see n. 21, above).

laughter to his quoted speech, is mediated through Simichidas' narration. As a result, we can go further than to observe that Theocritus repeatedly employs ambiguous laughter in *Idyll* 7 to characterize Lycidas. Theocritus also characterizes Simichidas through the use of ambiguous laughter. The narrator's ambivalent read on the goatherd is constructed and conveyed by the same vocabulary of laughter.

The identity of Lycidas is a vexed issue in Theocritean scholarship on *Idyll* 7. Many attempts to identify the mysterious goatherd draw upon a widely held interpretation of *Idyll* 7 as an account of poetic initiation—a *Dichterweihe* of Simichidas by Lycidas.[23] The Hesiodic and Archilochean models of poetic initiation present interactions between human and divine figures: a mortal poet and the immortal Muses. Because of these models, there is poetic precedent for interpreting the initiator—in this case Lycidas—as a divine figure. Theocritus is assuredly presenting an initiation scene here, but the tone of the initiation is so ambiguous that I am left unsure as to whether it is an authentic, divine initiation or instead a parody. Some scholars have attempted to identify Lycidas with a particular divine figure, but I make no attempt to further identify Lycidas.[24] I am content with the broad conclusions that *Idyll* 7 presents a poetic initiation, genuine or ironic, and that Lycidas is depicted as an indeterminate and otherworldly figure. I draw attention to the question of Lycidas' identity only because various scholars who propose that the goatherd's appearance in *Idyll* 7 represents a theophany use the gelastic vocabulary of the poem as evidence. They argue that Lycidas' laughter and grinning are manifestations of a “divine smile,” and yet so ambiguous is the goatherd's behavior that the same terms for laughter and smiling are used by scholars (among other arguments) to support his

23 Puelma (1960), Serrao (1971), and Giangrande (1968). Giangrande, like me, detects strong irony in the episode and the *Dichterweihe*.

24 Williams (1971) and Brown (1981) are noteworthy proponents of Lycidas' divinity. Clauss (2003) 291 summarizes several of their arguments and supports an identification with Pan.

identification with different gods.[25] In the end, the goatherd's identity remains as much of a mystery as his disposition. One could imagine that his laughter and smiles are provoked in part by our ongoing efforts to identify him as someone other than a goatherd "since he was altogether like a goatherd"—ἐπεὶ αἰπόλῳ ἔξοχ' ἐῴκει (v. 14).

Having proposed that laughter plays a key role in lending an ambiguous tone to *Idyll* 7, both through the particular gelastic terms that appear and in their repeated attribution to the goatherd Lycidas, let us consider briefly why we might interpret this ambiguity as a deliberate, cultivated effect in the poem. Simichidas' encounter with Lycidas in *Idyll* 7 constitutes the longest section of the poem and ultimately assumes the role of the primary narrative. The narrator's physical description of Lycidas, the account of their conversation, and their exchange of songs offer the *Idyll*'s reader various experiences of the mysterious goatherd; the narrative is replete with opportunities to contextualize the initiation and to establish a clear psychological background to the interactions between the characters. No such background—no clarity—is granted.

The narrator himself never fully interprets Lycidas' laughter or takes a stand on the goatherd's psychology. This is left for the reader to do. The various forms of psychologizing involved in the interpretation of nonverbal communication allow the narrator to use a simple word for laughter, such as γέλως in v. 20, and to invite the reader's participation. Simichidas requires the reader to interpret the goatherd's smiling and laughing expressions throughout the interchange and to evaluate the ongoing ambiguities of his character. By not describing himself in any detail, Simichidas does not open himself to these same ambiguities. He does, however, call into question his own comprehension of the situation. As readers, we perceive elements of a

25 Puelma (1960), Giangrande (1968), Williams (1971), Brown (1981), and Clauss (2003) all incorporate Lycidas' laughing and/or grinning into their divine identifications.

poetic initiation in the interaction between Simichidas and Lycidas. We also read a rich, genre-specific description of a *locus amoenus* by the narrator in the closing verses of the *Idyll* (vv. 131-157). Simichidas abstains from weighing in too heavily on either of these issues. Neither as character nor as narrator does Simichidas confirm that he is engaged in a literary initiation when he meets with Lycidas. Nor does he even let on that he is describing a bucolic *locus amoenus*. In fact, in the framing narrative, Lycidas betrays no overt poetic self-consciousness. A reader might quickly assume that Simichidas writes about this day because he is in fact aware of its significance, but the poem is far too casual to make such an assumption safe. The *Idyll* could just as easily be a response to the question, "What was the Thalysia harvest-festival like back in the day?" or "How did you get that walking stick?" as to "How did you become a bucolic poet?" Simichidas narrates a text that contains abundant clues for a literate Hellenistic audience, but, as narrator, he remains elusive as to whether he is offering these clues intentionally or to what mystery the clues may pertain. He leaves the ultimate interpretation to the reader without making his own interpretation clear. In fact, he does not even suggest that "interpretation" may be an appropriate demand to make of the text.

It can be seen that *Idyll* 7's ambiguity not only capitalizes on the inherent ambiguity of smiles and laughter but also draws upon the complexity of the poem's narrative structure. This is not ambiguity for its own sake. On the contrary, the ambiguity present in descriptions of laughter and smiles contributes to a *more* realistic atmosphere within the poem. The lack of clarity invites the reader to make the same decisions about laughter that any individual present at the interchange would have to make. The reader must attempt to "read" Lycidas and his gelastic behaviors through the lens of Simichidas' narrative and any potential distortion therein. Even where Simichidas hints at his own interpretations by the vocabulary of laughter he uses, he leaves enough unsaid—or said vaguely—to retain ambiguity within the episode.

Lest one think the confluence laughter, ambiguity, and characterization coincidental in *Idyll* 7, Theocritus uses the ambiguity of laughter and smiles (and the vocabulary for it) in a similar manner in others of his bucolic poems, thus implying a measured pairing of the two. In *Idyll* 11, the Cyclops Polyphemus ends his seaside address to Galatea by reminding himself (and her) that he has other options should she continue to avoid him:

> τί τὸν φεύγοντα διώκεις;
> εὑρησεῖς Γαλάτειαν ἴσως καὶ καλλίον᾽ ἄλλαν.
> πολλαὶ συμπαίσδεν με κόραι τὰν νύκτα κέλονται,
> κιχλίζοντι δὲ πᾶσαι, ἐπεί κ᾽ αὐταῖς ὑπακούσω.
> δῆλον ὅτ᾽ ἐν τᾷ γᾷ κἠγών τις φαίνομαι ἦμεν. (75-79)
>
> Why do you pursue the one fleeing?
> You will find perhaps another even more beautiful Galatea.
> Many maidens tell me to play with them during the night,
> and they all titter when I pay attention to them.
> It is clear that on land even I appear to be someone.

As σεσαρώς from v. 19 of *Idyll* 7 typically marks a certain type of smile, the verb κιχλίζοντι designates a particular type of laughter. The context of *Idyll* 11 grants the word decidedly feminine and sexual associations which are confirmed by ancient and modern lexicographers alike.[26] Those who Polyphemus says titter are young women, and, in addition to Hunter's observation that "verbs of 'playing' often carry a sexual sense" in his note on συμπαίσδεν,[27] the

---

26 The word appears first in Aristophanes (*Clouds,* v. 983) in which the immediate context implies that laughter of this sort is indicative of extravagance and weak masculinity:

> οὐδ᾽ ἀνελέσθαι δειπνοῦντ᾽ ἐξῆν κεφάλαιον τῆς ῥαφανῖδος,
> οὐδ᾽ ἄννηθον τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἁρπάζειν οὐδὲ σέλινον,
> οὐδ᾽ ὀψοφαγεῖν οὐδὲ κιχλίζειν οὐδ᾽ ἴσχειν τὼ πόδ᾽ ἐναλλαξ. (983-5)
> ---
> Nor was it possible for him, while eating, to grab the head of a radish,
> nor to snatch from older men dill or celery,
> nor to eat delicacies nor to giggle nor to hold his legs crossed.

The scholia on this passage gloss κιχλίζειν as κίχλας ἐσθίειν ἢ γελᾶν ἀτάκτως: "to eat thrushes or to laugh in a disorderly manner." In his note on the verb's use in *Idyll 11*, Gow II (1954) 220 directs the reader to Bekker's *Anecdota Graeca*: κιχλισμός· πορνικὸς γέλως πολύς καὶ ἄκοσμος (*A.B.* 270.31)—"the great and disorderly laughter of prostitutes." The Suda (s.v. κιχλισμός; 1695) also defines the nominal form: ὁ λεπτὸς καὶ ἀκόλαστος γέλως—"light and licentious laughter." See also LSJ s.v. κιχλίζω and Chaintraine (1968) s.v. κίχλη.

27 Hunter (1999) 242.

fact that this "play" is to take place during the night (τὰν νύκτα) leaves little doubt as to the sexual sense.

Polyphemus states that women express sexual interest in him and giggle in response to his attention. The conclusion that he draws from this is self-affirming: he's a "somebody." The scholia on 11.78 detect something different in the laughter, glossing κιχλίζοντι as σφόδρα γελῶσι καὶ διαχέονται ("Excessively they laugh and relax themselves") and then hypothesizing ἴσως δὲ καταγελῶσιν αὐτοῦ ("Perhaps they laugh at him"). The psychological charge of κιχλίζοντι is inconclusive. The Cyclops uses it to suggest the excited tittering of desirous girls, but the scholia read it as a dissolute or patronizing laughter. These disparate interpretations of κιχλίζειν point to a semantic meaning that is neither exclusively good-natured nor derisive, though under all readings the term remains typical of females and conveys sexual undertones. As in *Idyll* 7*,* the reader is drawn into the narrative of *Idyll* 11 by being required to interpret the laughter where no certain conclusion is offered.

And as in *Idyll* 7, forming such an interpretation requires a consideration not only of the vocabulary used but of the broader context of the laughter. In the Cyclops' song, the ambiguity of the laughter is further destabilized by the varied narrative voices in the passage in which it appears.[28] Beginning with a vocative self-address in v. 72 (he shouts "Oh Cyclops, Cyclops") and continuing through v. 76 with the verb εὑρησεῖς, the Cyclops exhorts himself in the second-person. He otherwise uses first-person speech throughout the internal frame of the poem (in vv. 19 to 71) in which he frequently invokes a narrative "I" and repeatedly addresses and calls upon

28 Much has been written about *Idyll 11*. Because this poem is not the focus of my investigation, I have contented myself with a few relevant observations. See Gow II (1954) 208-220 and Hunter (1999) 215-243 for their extensive discussions of this poem. Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) offer a succinct description of the poem's ironic cast: "[T]he whole of *Idyll* 11 is coloured by an irony arising from the ambiguous definition of the Cyclops's song as a φάρμακον for his love" (165).

Galatea.[29] In vv. 77 to 79, he resumes this use of a first-person voice (με, ὑπακούσω, κἠγών and φαίνομαι). It is only in vv. 72-6 that he speaks in the second-person.

By shifting to the second-person for these 5 verses near the end of the poem, the Cyclops offers himself something of a pep-talk. The urgency, frustration and despair conveyed by the repetition of Κύκλωψ in v. 72 are immediate. Polyphemus attempts to enact his abandonment of Galatea as a desired lover by abandoning her as his addressee; he claims new ownership of his song when he commands himself to move on rather than to seek her acceptance.

But in v. 77, just as he retreats into his previous mode of first-person narrative, he brags of the giggling women who express interest in him. With his use of the narrative "I," Galatea silently resumes her role as his addressee. Polyphemus does not tell himself about these other potential, laughing lovers; he tells Galatea. The effects of his self-motivation are short-lived as he attempts to persuade Galatea immediately after swearing her off.

The shifts between first- and second-person narrative at the end of Polyphemus' song indicate his emotional instability by way of the instability of his narrative voice. The adverb ἴσως in v. 76 shows him to lack confidence in ever finding "another, fairer" Galatea. He makes a final attempt at attracting Galatea's attention . . . by trying to make her jealous. His first-person narrative allows him to have an implied addressee precisely when he claims to have other romantic options—a claim that does not even need to be true in order to fulfill its purpose.[30] The words used to describe the desires and attentions of the interested maidens are sexually charged (συμπαίσδεν and κιχλίζοντι) not necessarily because the women actually bid him to "play with"

29 He addresses her as Γαλάτεια (vv. 19 and 63), (χαρίεσσα) κόρα (vv. 25 and 30), κόριον (v. 60), and uses second-person verbs, pronouns, and possessive adjectives to refer to her throughout.

30 The parallel in a modern relationship can be easily imagined: A man mentions to an estranged girlfriend that other women have been seeking his company, but he does this only to stoke her jealousy and win her back. There may not be any other women. A wonderful irony of *Idyll* 11 is that there is never any indication within the poem that Galatea hears the Cyclops. His attempts at persuasion, including this desperate effort, may fall on no ears at all.

them or titter at his response. Polyphemus uses these words for the very reason that they are suggestive. And yet the scholia see the potential for derision. The shifting of the narrative voice near the end of *Idyll* 11 compounds the ambiguity of the laughter Polyphemus describes. The laughter is not only psychologically ambiguous within the scenario in which it is presented, but its very existence depends upon the reliability of the Cyclops as narrator. Why would the Cyclops allow for such ambiguity in the vocabulary and context of the laughter when he, as narrator, is the one framing it? Is it deliberate, or is it evidence of his clumsiness as a poet? Or is it a means of characterization by the ultimate "framer" Theocritus?

Ultimately, the conclusions to be drawn from these inquiries are strikingly similar to those arrived at in the exploration of laughter and smiling in *Idyll* 7. Theocritus uses laughter and smiling to cultivate an indefinite atmosphere that invites the reader's involvement in the interpretation of characters and narrative voices. The other famous occasion of laughter in the Theocritean corpus can be briefly cited in support of such a hypothesis. In *Idyll* 1, the laughter of Aphrodite is a vehicle for unfixed characterization:

> ἦνθέ γε μὰν ἀδεῖα καὶ ἁ Κύπρις γελάοισα,
> λάθρη μὲν γελάοισα, βαρὺν δ' ἀνὰ θυμὸν ἔχοισα [. . .] (vv. 94-5)

The discussion and debate these two verses have inspired among scholars is ample evidence of the passage's ambiguity and sufficient reason to leave them untranslated.[31] Whether Aphrodite is visibly laughing while hiding her anger or restraining laughter while exhibiting her anger, her twice repeated "laughter" (sweet and/or hidden) features prominently in the narrative. Of course other words contribute to the ambiguity of the passage. The use of θυμόν may refer to an inward expression or the passionate source of an outward one.[32] The verb ἀνέχω has the contradictory

31 The passage is treated at length in Crane (1987).

32 Cf. Odysseus' sardonic smile "in his heart" after dodging the cow's foot thrown by the suitor Ktesippus in *Od.* 20.300-302.

meanings of "to hold up" and "to hold back."[33] The reader is required to make several decisions about diction and context in the space of just one sentence, and each of these decisions has the potential to contribute to vastly different interpretations of the atmosphere of the scene, of the character of Aphrodite and her relationship to Daphnis, and even of the authority of the narrator.[34] Nevertheless, laughter is at the root of the ambiguity, and how the reader interprets Aphrodite's laughter colors the poem as a whole.

In this Theocritean detour, I have proposed that the laughter and smiling in three of Theocritus' most influential and imitated poems—and all three are touched upon to varying degrees by Vergil—function as a source of deliberate ambiguity. The effect of this laughter-catalyzed "ambiguation" is not as destabilizing as one might expect.[35] On the contrary, the indefinite atmosphere and characterization established by descriptions of gelastic behavior mirror the actual ambiguities of many real-life occasions of laughter and smiles. The psychological give-and-take involved in the interpretation of a laugh—or the interpretation of the individual narrating the laugh—is recreated for the reader in *Idyll* 7 and others of Theocritus' poems. The poet draws upon the inherent ambiguity of laughter, the specific polyvalence of particular terms for laughter and smiling, and the flexibility offered by various narratological techniques to create a bucolic atmosphere in which the reader can experience first-hand realistic uncertainties by way of parsing the characters' ways of perceiving and dealing with these uncertainties.

The foregoing treatment of laughter in Theocritus raises the issues I address in the remainder of this section. If one accepts that *Idyll* 7 makes programmatic gestures and presents a *Dichterweihe* in which Lycidas is cast as a gatekeeper for the genre, one cannot ignore the fact that this figure with a real or ironic power of initiation is portrayed repeatedly as smiling and

33 LSJ s.v. ἀνέχω. Cf. also Crane (1987) 169-70

34 Once again, our vocabulary of laughter appears in an inset, consciously-poetic narrative, i.e., the song of Thyrsis to the goatherd.

35 I like to think of "ambiguity" as the cheese of Theocritean bucolic and laughter as the rennet.

laughing.[36] Are laughter and smiles—sweet, sneering, or otherwise—simply secondary-indicators of a playfulness and irreverence that more broadly typify and characterize elements of bucolic poetry, or might they, in their potential to communicate and embody ambiguity, function as ends in themselves?

Simichidas concludes his description of the harvest festival (and ends the poem as a whole) with an explicit hope for laughter:

> [. . .] Δάματρος ἁλωίδος; ἅς ἐπὶ σωρῷ ἅς ἐπὶ σωρῷ
> αὖτις ἐγὼ πάξαιμι μέγα πτύον, ἃ δὲ γελάσσαι
> δράγματα καὶ μάκωνας ἐν ἀμφοτέραισιν ἔχοισα. (vv. 155-7)
>
> [. . .] of Demeter of the Threshing Floor; on whose heap
> may I once again plant a great winnowing-fan, and may she laugh
> while holding stalks and poppies in both hands.

The intuitive explanation of the passage is that a laugh from this divinity communicates her beneficence. Yet the correspondence between laughter and agricultural bounty is not, strictly speaking, a necessary one; Demeter could be equally bountiful without laughing. Why, then, does Simichidas hope for her laughter? He even seems to privilege it over her accompanying gifts by making γελάσσαι the primary verb of the clause. As the only occurrence in *Idyll* 7 of a term for laughter that does not describe Lycidas, Demeter's desired laugh harks back to the persistent laughter and smiling of the mysterious goatherd.[37] Perhaps Simichidas is hoping not only for an encounter with a kindly goddess but for a repeat of his run-in with Lycidas and his introduction to the Theocritean bucolic world, where laughs and smiles toe a line of ambiguity—

36 Hunter (1999) 150 ventures that Lycidas' "ever present smile marks the irony at the heart of the 'bucolic' tradition—'true' knowledge of the countryside is not in fact important for the productions of 'bucolic song.'" Though I do not think it is possible to link Lycidas' smiles directly with statements about knowledge (or ignorance) of the countryside, I find the suggestion that smiles and laughter are in some sense representative of the genre appealing.

37 The laugh of Demeter distinguishes itself by its unambiguous positive valence, but this laugh is not (yet) real; it is narrated in Simichidas' wish.

between positive and negative, divine and human, urban and rural, and even fantasy and reality —just as the puzzling genre in which they appear.

Section IB: Latin Laughter Localized via Lucretius

The laughter that Vergil incorporates into the fabric of his *Eclogues* constructs a very "Theocritean" ambiguity in given passages and poems, an argument that I advance in the following reading of *Eclogue* 4. Vergil also draws repeatedly upon laughter as a feature in pathetic fallacies—those moments in pastoral poems (and literature in general) when the world is described as being sympathetic with the emotions of particular inhabitants.[38] Laughter offers itself as a recurring form that this sympathy takes in Vergil's predecessors, appearing in Homer's *Iliad* (Bk. 19.362) and the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (v. 14) as well as in Demeter's final laugh of *Idyll* 7 discussed above.[39] More temporally proximate to Vergil's *Eclogues* than the aforementioned Greek texts, Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* presents a strong "pathetic" connection between laughter and a pastoral-poetic world. Lucretius' depiction of the origins of music and pastoral poetry in Book 5 of his hexameter didactic epic features such a high concentration of the vocabulary of laughter that a connection between pastoral and laughter may have been all but obligatory when Vergil embarked upon his own pastoral project.

In Book 5 of *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius presents an atomistic account of the history of the physical world and the origins of terrestrial life and human civilization—his

38 I use the term "pathetic fallacy" more restrictedly than as a synonym for "personification," although there is unavoidable overlap. I regard as "pathetic fallacies" those moments in which an emotional state, which may be (and often is) indicated by either laughter or tears, is 1) ascribed to nature and 2) purported to be a sympathetic response to the human world. See Abrams (1999) 203: "Pathetic Fallacy. A phrase invented by John Ruskin in 1856 to signify any representation of inanimate natural objects that ascribes to them human capabilities, sensations, and emotions [. . .]."

39 Demeter's desired smile at the end of *Idyll* 7 offers a variation on a pathetic fallacy wherein the harvest goddess is a metonym for the agricultural world. A more conventional pathetic fallacy would be if Simichidas expressed a wish that the harvest itself laugh for—or smile upon—him.

Kulturgeschichte. Shortly after detailing the beginnings of agriculture (vv. 1361-1378), the poet chronicles the birth of the arts—music and dancing, in particular—among primitive humans:

at liquidas auium uoces imitarier ore
ante fuit multo quam leuia carmina cantu
concelebrare homines possent aurisque iuuare.
et zephyri, caua per calamorum, sibila primum
agrestis docuere cauas inflare cicutas.
inde minutatim dulcis didicere querellas,
tibia quas fundit digitis pulsata canentum,
auia per nemora ac siluas saltusque reperta,
per loca pastorum deserta atque otia dia.
haec animos ollis mulcebant atque iuuabant
cum satiate cibi; nam tum sunt omnia cordi.
saepe itaque inter se prostrati in gramine molli
propter aquae riuom sub ramis arboris altae
non magnis opibus iucunde corpora habebant,
praesertim cum tempestas ridebat et anni
tempora pingebant uiridantis floribus herbas.
tum ioca, tum sermo, tum dulces esse cachinni
consuerant. agrestis enim tum musa uigebat;
tum caput atque umeros plexis redimire coronis
floribus et foliis lasciuia laeta mouebat,
atque extra numerum procedere membra mouentis
duriter et duro terram pede pellere matrem;
unde oriebantur risus dulcesque cachinni,
omnia quod noua tum magis haec et mira uigebant.

But the imitation of the fluid voices of birds with the mouth
far preceded men's ability to practice
polished songs by singing and to delight the ears.
And the whistles of Zephyr through the hollows of reeds first
taught rustic men to blow into hollow pipes.
Thereupon, little by little, they learned sweet laments
which the flute poured forth, struck by the fingers of singers,
heard through the remote woods, forests, and glades,
through the deserted places of shepherds and the divine retreats.
These laments soothed their spirits and delighted them
after the satisfaction of food, for then are all things pleasant.
Often in this way, lying down together in the soft grass
near a stream of water beneath the branches of a high tree,
at minimal expense they kept themselves pleased,
especially when the weather laughed and the year's

40 Following Costa (1984), whose Latin text and punctuation I quote above and who in this section follows Bailey's OCT. I do not include vv. 1388-1389 in this passage.

seasons were coloring the greening fields with flowers.
Then jokes, then conversation, then sweet cackles were wont
to happen. For then the rural muse was flourishing;
then glad playfulness moved them to encircle head and shoulders
with crowns woven from flowers and leaves,
and to proceed unrhythmically, dancing
harshly, and to strike the earth mother with a harsh foot;
From which arose laughs and sweet cackles,
because all of these things, more new and wondrous, were flourishing.

The passage's bucolic *qua* Theocritean credentials are immediately apparent in the personnel, setting, and aesthetic terms.[41] The singers are rustics and shepherds (v. 1383 and v. 1387), the setting is beneath a tree (v. 1393; cf. *Id*. 1.21), and sweetness (variants on *dulcis* in vv. 1384, 1397, and 1403; cf. ἁδύ and ἄδιον in *Id*. 1.1, 1.2 and 1.7) and softness (*molle* in v. 1392; cf. μαλακώτερα in *Id*. 5.51 and 5.57) abound.[42] Lucretius could very well be offering an external observer's description of episodes in Theocritus' pastoral *Idylls* or Vergil's *Eclogues*.[43]

A comprehensive pathetic fallacy appears in vv. 1394-1397 as positive emotions and emotional displays are relayed from humanity to the natural world and then back to humans. The pleasure of the singers in v. 1394 (*iucunde corpora habebant*) is given a natural outlet in the laughing of the weather in v. 1395. The pathetic fallacy is particularly effective insofar as the sympathy between the human and natural realms clarifies the emotional register of each, with *iucunde*'s positive charge forestalling potential negative associations with nature's subsequent laughter, and laughter itself concretizing the broad emotional state expressed by *iucunde*.[44] The poet then states that joking, conversing, and cackling (v. 1397) occur, all presumably among

41 Gale (1994) notes the many verbal correspondences between this passage and *DRN* 4.580-594 (134 n. 16) before noting that Lucretius is "evoking the idealized countryside of bucolic poetry" (135).

42 Rumpf (2008) remarks of Theocritus' *Idylls* that "there is no elaborate system of adjectives: only a few of them (e.g., ἁδύς, καλός, and μαλακός) occur frequently or regularly" (68 n. 6). Hunter (1999) notes of ἁδύ in *Id.* 1.1 that "'sweetness' is to be the key quality of T.'s bucolic verse" (70).

43 *Mollis* is used attributively 14 times in the *Eclogues* and *dulcis* 22 times. See Rumpf (2008) 67-68 n. 5 and n. 6. Boyle (1977) 123-5, Hardie (1998) 10-12, and Breed (2000b) 7-14 examine this passage of *DRN* as evidence of Lucretius' influence on Vergil.

44 The temporal clause introduced by *cum* in v. 1395 qualifies the independent clause in v. 1394 and allows the two events to be read as occurring simultaneously, but the poet, by presenting the verses in the above order, creates the illusion that the human pleasure precedes the laughing of the weather.

humans, in the wake of the weather's laughing. The sympathy between nature and humans in vv. 1396-1397 proceeds, significantly, in the opposite direction: rather than nature taking on human emotions, human cackles echo and amplify the laughter of the weather.[45] The gelastic vocabulary, spreading contagiously from nature to humans, crescendoes from *ridebat* in v. 1396 to *cachinni* in v. 1397. The narrator is nonetheless careful to soften these "cackles" with the pastorally-resonant *dulces*, and he rounds out v. 1398 with mention of the *agrestis musa*—the "rustic muse" whose invocation serves as a reminder to the reader that the occasion for such *bonhomie* is the sharing of newly-discovered music.

Gale (1994) identifies the passage as a description of a *locus amoenus* (a concept I treat at greater length when we turn to the *Eclogues*) and regards flowers and springs as "symbols of pleasure." Indeed, pleasure remains the dominant emotion within the passage.[46] The verb *iuuare* appears twice (v. 1381 and v. 1390), and the potentially-mournful *querellae* of v. 1384, like the potentially abrasive *cachinni* of v. 1397, are colored by their explicit sweetness—*dulces*.[47] The passage continues to evoke abundance, softness, leisure, and beauty in its diction until the adverb and adjective *duriter* and *durus* appear in v. 1402. Yet even these "harsh" words used to describe the earliest dances present no challenge to the atmosphere of pleasure; the dancing, harsh though it may be, provokes in v. 1403 a concentration of laughter and sweet cackles.[48]

The recurrence of laughter in nature and among humans in vv. 1379-1404 reinforces the feeling of pleasure that predominates in the passage. More could be said of how this pleasure interacts with Lucretius' poetic and Epicurean programs, and Epicurus' own relationship with

45 It should be noted that this sympathy is not a proper "pathetic fallacy." That nature may impact human emotion is not "fallacious" and is surely familiar to any reader who has felt her mood affected by natural surroundings.

46 See Furley (2007) 178 for a list of words that he associates with pleasure in this passage.

47 Gale (1994) 147-8.

48 Gale (1994) is wide of the mark in asserting of this passage that "poetry and music appear in a more ambiguous light, associated with both simple pleasure and unnecessary and unlimited desires" (140). The section that follows the passage under discussion (specifically vv. 1422-1435) offers examples of what happens when pleasure is sought excessively, but poetry and music do not feature in these examples.

laughter certainly warrants additional attention.[49] For the present, it suffices to note that Lucretius portrays the origin of music as a pastoral phenomenon set in a *locus amoenus* and populated by a contagious vocabulary of laughter (v. 1395, v. 1397, and twice in v. 1403). The passage recasts Theocritean figures, setting, and terminology (gelastic and otherwise) in a Latin idiom that sets the stage for the pastoral world of Vergil's *Eclogues*.

In the remainder of this chapter, I consider how Vergil's pastoral poetry draws upon the two distinct "kinds" of laughter discussed in the preceding pages. The *Eclogues* play textual home to the ambiguous laughter of Theocritus and to the sympathetic laughter of Lucretius, the former a laughter of character and the latter, effectively, a laughter of place. Both kinds of laughter, like two playful sides of the same puzzle piece, play complementary roles in establishing the tone of the *Eclogues* and in coloring Vergil's approach to his selected genre.

SECTION IIA: NATURE'S LAUGHTER IN *ECLOGUES* 7 AND 4

My examination of laughter in Vergil's *Eclogues* begins with the "laughter of place" and attributions of laughter to the natural world in two short passages from *Eclogues* 7 and 4. Before I leave behind Lucretius' pastoral passage in *De Rerum Natura*, however, I would like to consider how an odd detail in this excerpt of Book 5 might invite readers to draw a natural connection between laughter and the pastoral world. The oddity hinges upon the sequence in which laughter appears in these verses dedicated to considerations of *imitatio*. The origin of vocal song is ascribed by the narrator to the imitation of a natural occurrence, namely, of the singing of birds.

49 Cf. Epicurus, *Sent. Vat.* 41: γελᾶν ἅμα δεῖ καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς οἰκειώμασι χρῆσθαι καὶ μηδαμῇ λήγειν τὰς ἐκ τῆς ὀρθῆς φιλοσοφίας φωνὰς ἀφιέντας—"It is necessary to laugh and at the same time to philosophize and to manage domestic affairs and to make use of remaining advantages and in no way to abandon those sayings proceeding from true philosophy." Halliwell (2008) assigns programmatic force to the foregrounding of γελᾶν, "as though laughter should colour the whole of life, serving as a psychological underpinning of philosophy itself" (358). Halliwell briefly (358-359) provides evidence of laughter's ambiguous status in surviving texts associated with Epicureanism: is this laughter a product of *ataraxia* or of mockery?

The origin of flute playing is ascribed by the narrator to another imitation of a natural occurrence, namely, of the whistling of winds in reeds. How fitting, then, that the laughter narrated in v. 1395—the first laughter in the passage—is attributed not to humans but to the weather (*tempestas*). Human cackles only materialize in the subsequent verses, as if they too were imitations of a natural occurrence. Laughter, at least as it is presented within Lucretius' pastoral sketch, is indigenous to the *locus amoenus* itself—a behavior in the natural world that precedes what in Lucretius' account of the origins of culture is the first human laugh. The passage invites readers to consider that the connection between laughter and pastoral pathetic fallacies may be, quite literally, "natural," and that laughter features in pathetic fallacies because these are not always fallacies but, in some sense, aetiologies for how humans learned to laugh. The clattering of waves, the chirping of birds—these were nature's first laughs, and as with vocal song and flute music, humans learned to laugh through imitation of the natural world.[50]

Whatever the merits of this suggestion, laughter appears in two descriptions of nature in Vergil's *Eclogues*. In the poetic competition between Corydon and Thyrsis recounted by Meliboeus in *Eclogue* 7, one particular exchange between the poets in vv. 53-60 offers up a concentration of claims of sympathy between human emotions and the natural world, and universal laughter seems to follow from natural bounty.

Corydon
stant et iuniperi et castaneae hirsutae,
strata iacent passim sua quaeque sub arbore poma,
omnia nunc rident: at si formosus Alexis
montibus his abeat, videas et flumina sicca.
Thyrsis
aret ager, uitio moriens sitit aëris herba,
Liber pampineas inuidit collibus umbras:
Phyllidis aduentu nostrae nemus omne uirebit,
Iuppiter et laeto descendet plurimus imbri.

50 I imagine that the songs of birds could be thought to sound like laughter, but I am not sure that any such thing is occurring here.

Corydon

Standing are both the junipers and the bristled chestnuts;
strewn everywhere there lies beneath each tree its own fruit;
everything now laughs: but if beautiful Alexis should
depart from these mountains, you would see even the rivers dry.

Thyrsis

The field is parched, by failing of air the dying grass thirsts,
Liber refuses vined shades to the hills:
with our Phyllis' arrival, all the forest will grow green,
and Jupiter will descend with abundance of fertile rain.

The eight verses are beautifully balanced in content. Corydon's quatrain narrates a shift from bounty to drought before Thyrsis' verses reverse the order to return from drought to verdant abundance. Balance is also achieved in the use of poetic constructions: both shepherds, in the course of narrating one pathetic fallacy, imply another.

Corydon's description of nature in vv. 53-54 seems at first to be just that, namely, a realizable description of natural abundance. When he adds the detail that "everything now laughs" before the caesura of v. 55, the phrase becomes an occasion of personification of the natural world wherein universal laughter greets the plentitude of the previous two verses. It is as if Corydon hears the bountiful laughter that Simichidas desires of Demeter at the end of Theocritus' *Idyll* 7. Corydon then hypothesizes a straightforward occasion of sympathy between the human and natural worlds in the second half of v. 55 and v. 56 when he declares that rivers would run dry if the object of his affection Alexis should disappear. The pathetic fallacy is clear-cut, albeit yet to be realized, but the terms of the condition offer ample information about the *status quo*. In order for Alexis potentially to depart in v. 55-56, he must be present in the verses that precede. Moreover, if his departure is to be felt so strongly in the natural world, his presence becomes the implicit explanation for the bounty of vv. 53-55. Corydon's verses thus contain two pathetic fallacies, one realized and the other conditional; the first only becomes apparent when the possibility of the second is raised.

The two pathetic fallacies in Thyrsis' quatrain unfold similarly, with the first offered as if it were a narration of fact and the second anticipated in the future. The verses differ from Corydon's for the order in which they proceed, beginning with Phyllis' implied absence and resolving with her anticipated return, and for their own internal balance, with each fallacy allotted two complete lines.[51] Thyrsis' conception of abundance also distinguishes itself through its retained focus on water throughout his verses: the rain mentioned in the final world of v. 60 responds to the dryness declared in the first word of v. 57. Surprising, however, in a passage built upon pathetic fallacies and in verses that are constructed in response to a claim of omnipresent laughter, is the fact that Thyrsis uses rain to illustrate the positive sympathetic response in nature. Crying would seem to be the human emotional response with which rain would naturally be identified. The ominous rains that Zeus sends for his soon-to-perish son Sarpedon in *Iliad* 16.459 offer clear precedent for an association of rain (admittedly unnatural, in this case) with anthropomorphic grief.[52] But sadness and crying among individuals in the pastoral world do not precipitate a corresponding moisture-related response. Grief is signposted elsewhere in the *Eclogues* by weeping (e.g., that of the nymphs in *Ecl*. 5.21), by groaning (e.g., that of the lions in *Ecl*. 5.27), and even by the effects on the natural world of human neglect of duties (e.g., the hanging fruit in *Ecl*. 1.37), but not by rain. Water is too much of a boon to the growth and abundance that characterize pastoral settings.[53]

To return to the laughter in v. 55, its defining feature is its universality, with its sole localization being temporal: everything now (*nunc*) laughs. In the moment pinpointed in

51 Fantazzi and Querbach (1985) 357 deem this exchange the only one in which Thyrsis emerges as the clear victor, although their reasons for declaring as much are not offered. Clausen (1994) 210 summarizes other critical assessments of the competition in which the fifth exchange is repeatedly judged to be a draw or a victory for Thyrsis. I offer potential reasons for (and, later, against) such a critique below. Egan (1996) makes a persuasive case for Corydon's victory from the final two quatrains but does not comment on the previous ones, although he comments intriguingly that because of the poem's abrupt and inscrutable conclusion, “the ludic qualities of the contest are thus extended beyond the contest itself, and indeed beyond the poem” (233).

52 See Lateiner (2002).

53 *umor* is modified by the pastorally charged *dulce* in *Ecl.* 3.82.

Corydon's narration, laughter overwhelms all of its surroundings and, in so doing, becomes the tonal lynch-pin of a taut, four-verse pastoral vignette. This is the "laughter of place," and its place in these verses, implied by the subject *omnia*, is everywhere. Yet such laughter, when examined against the ambiguous "laughter of character" described in the preceding treatment of Theocritus, hardly seems a secure bet when it comes to discerning tone. What is to keep this "laughter of place" from being similarly ambiguous, especially when, as will be seen in the following treatment of *Eclogue* 4, it uses the very same vocabulary of laughter and risible? The answer, I contend, resides in the *locus amoenus*. The edenic setting of pastoral, if we approach it in analogy with the "laughter of character," is a unique character who, in name and nature, is essentially beautiful. Furthermore, this character is known to all for being desirable in every way; everyone wants to spend time in his presence. Laughter that occurs within the context of a *locus amoenus* serves to reflect and construct a setting's inherent positive valence.

Does the laughter in *Ecl.* 7.55 occur within a *locus amoenus*? The question requires some clarification. Because of its extensive (and relatively stable) literary history from Homer through Plato to Theocritus, I regard the *locus amoenus* as an established ontological category, or a "set description," by the time Vergil writes, and his use of the topographical description further cements it features.[54] The landscape comprises a collection of standard features that can be deployed severally to represent the category.[55] Let us look at Corydon's verses again:

> *stant et iuniperi et castaneae hirsutae,*
> *strata iacent passim sua quaeque sub arbore poma,*
> *omnia nunc rident: at si formosus Alexis* 55

54 For the *locus amoenus* as a "set description," see *OCD* s.v. *locus amoenus*: "used by modern scholars to refer to the literary topos of the set description of an idyllic landscape, typically containing trees and shade, a grassy meadow, running water, song-birds, and cool breezes." I consider laughter to be something of a second-order member of this list (alongside, for example, birdsong).

55 Curtius (1953) 195 notes of the *locus amoenus* that its "minimum ingredients comprise a tree (or several trees), a meadow, and a spring or brook. Birdsong and flowers may be added. The most elaborate examples also add a breeze." In listing the "usual attributes" of "an almost stereotypical sylvan scenery" that shares many features with the *locus amoenus*, Segal (1969) identifies "quiet water" along with a grove, shade, cool temperatures, grass, and perhaps a cave (4).

montibus his abeat, videas et flumina sicca.

Standing are both the junipers and the bristled chestnuts;
strewn everywhere there lies beneath each tree its own fruit;
everything now laughs: but if beautiful Alexis should 55
depart from these mountains, you would see even the rivers dry.

One component of the *locus amoenus* is present at the outset. Sprawling chestnut trees, if not the typically-narrow junipers, would cast ample shade, especially when standing tall. A shepherd or goatherd could sing or play music while reclining in soft grass beneath the shade of such trees, much as Tityrus lounges beneath a beech tree in the first verses of the book of *Eclogues*.[56] More trees are mentioned in v. 54, but because of their production of fruit so ripe to have fallen of its own accord, a visitor might hesitate to recline beneath them. A comparable image features in the *locus amoenus* from the conclusion of *Idyll* 7:

ὄχναι μὲν πὰρ ποσσί, παρὰ πλευραῖσι δὲ μᾶλα 144
δαψιλέως ἁμῖν ἐκυλίνδετο, τοὶ δ' ἐκέχυντο
ὄρπακες βραβίλοισι καταβρίθοντες ἔραζε·

And pears at our feet, and at our sides apples 144
in abundance were rolling, and saplings drooped,
weighed down toward the ground with prunes.

The natural production in the grove visited by Simichidas and his friends resembles the bounty of fruit "strewn everywhere [. . .]" in *Eclogue* 7.54, and one might think that the description of fruit in Vergil's verse speaks for itself as an unambiguously positive representation of bounty. However, in *Eclogues* 1.37, fruit that hangs long on the branches—a natural precursor of fruit that lies scattered on the ground—is associated with grief (*maesta*) by the speaker Meliboeus.[57] Such an association would hardly be welcome in a *locus amoenus*. But a subtle hint that the fruit in *Ecl.* 7 is not a product of grief-borne neglect is apparent in the order implied in the remainder of Corydon's v. 54—"[. . .] there lies beneath each tree its own fruit." Fruit falls

56 Tityrus reclines *patulae . . . sub tegmine fagi* in v. 1 and *lentus in umbra* in v. 4. Cf. *Ecl*. 7.10, wherein Meliboeus narrates Daphnis' gentle command: *et, si quid cessare potes, requisce sub umbra*.

57 *mirabar quid maesta deos, Amarylli, vocares, / cui pendere sua patereris in arbore poma.*

everywhere, as *passim* still lends an element of chaos to the image, but it does so in a pseudo-orderly fashion. With the exception of this detail, however, the reader is granted few indicators in these first two verses as to the emotional charge of Corydon's quatrain. A cautious reader might reasonably believe that trees and abundant fruit do not a *locus amoenus* make.

We must examine the aftermath of the laughter that Corydon narrates in v. 55. In the wake of *omnia nunc rident,* a disjunctive "but" (*at* in v. 55) follows the caesura. Laughter is cut short, and the possible frustrations unfold in the subsequent conditional sentence.[58] In his relationship to Alexis, this frustration is imagined to be abandonment by his beloved. In the physical, pastoral world, Corydon projects that this frustration would manifest as drought.

Corydon's placement of laughter and dryness at opposite ends of the nature's pathetic spectrum renders laughter an indicator not only of a generalized positive emotion but also, by extension, of water. A correspondence between laughter and water is also apparent when the reader steps back from the specifics of Corydon's verses and considers the overall balance of the quatrains in this fifth exchange between Corydon and Thyrsis. The laughter of v. 55 mirrors the Jupiter-sent downpour that Thyrsis narrates in the second half of his own quatrain. The responsion between the pathetic fallacies of the two quatrains can be visualized as follows:

(Corydon's Quatrain, vv. 53-56)
First half (vv. 53-55½): upright tress, abundant fruit, universal laughter
Second half (vv. 55½-56): dry rivers

(Thyrsis' Quatrain, vv. 57-60)
First half (vv. 57-58): parched fields, bad air, excessive sun
Second half (vv. 59-60): verdant growth and abundant rains

The simple visualization may offer an indication of why some scholars have considered Thyrsis' composition the stronger of the two in this particular exchange. There is a balance in his verses,

58 Alper (1979) 81 remarks on the commonality of frustration between Tityrus and Meliboeus in *Ecl*. 1. If laughter is the mark of pastoral setting when it is "high," what does it look like when it is low?

with two allotted to each of his pathetic fallacies, as well as the even thematic movement from drought to rain. Conversely, a reader might regard Corydon's two-and-a-half dactyls narrating universal laughter in v. 55 as a source of deficiency in his verses, at least from the perspective of lineation. His quatrain lacks the simple visual proportionality of Thyrsis' verses, and the phrase *omnia nunc rident* intrudes upon the textual real estate of the third of the four verses. The pathetic fallacy of dry rivers must then be compressed into a verse and half. Should a reader wish to identify a thematic weakness in Corydon's mention of laughter in this quatrain, laughter and drought may not be considered natural opposites any more than laughter and water seem natural companions.

Yet in the pastoral world, they are natural enough. We have already encountered laughter and water in close proximity to one another in the Lucretian and Theocritean passages treated in the previous pages. In Lucretius' Bk. 5.1379-1404, the evolution of shepherding songs occurs "near a stream of water" (*propter aquae riuom* in v. 1393), and the weather is described as having laughed (*ridebat* in v. 1395) only two verses later. The laughter then precipitates, in the sequence of verses, a natural flourishing in v. 1396. In Theocritus' *Idyll* 7, just before the mysterious goatherd Lycidas departs following the exchange of songs, he is said to have laughed sweetly (ἀδὺ γελάσσας in v. 128). Simichidas thereafter narrates in vv. 131-136 his and his traveling companions' arrival at their destination, the farm of Phrasydamus, where they recline on reed couches beneath rustling trees: "And, nearby, the sacred water of the Nymphs babbled, falling from a cave" (vv. 136-7).[59] The occasions of laughter and water in *Idyll* 7 are not as close (at 9 verses) as in the Lucretian passage (3 verses), but the passage in the *Idyll* is all the more interesting for its thematic movement from narrated laughter to the description of abundance—

59 τὸ δ' ἐγγύθεν ἱερὸν ὕδωρ / Νυμφᾶν ἐξ ἄντροιο κατειβόμενον κελάρυζεν.

water included. It is as if the laughter cues the description *qua* celebration that follows.[60] In case the cue is missed, laughter returns in the final verses when the description concludes with Simichidas' wish to encounter a laughing, well-disposed Demeter in his future.[61] The vocabulary of laughter ultimately surrounds the trees, water, and entire landscape described in the closing verses of the *Idyll*.[62]

Manifest in my revisitation of the pastoral passage in Lucretius' Bk. 5 and of the closing verses of Theocritus' *Idyll* 7 (vv. 131-157) is that water and laughter are common threads that run throughout these selections. Neither one, however, is the red thread that binds things together. For this we must broaden our scope to consider the broader literary experience of the *locus amoenus*. Trees, shade, fruit, soft grass, caves, and water can—and often do—feature, but neither are all of these components necessary for an idealized landscape description nor are they even sufficient. The literary topos of the *locus amoenus* is, by the time of Vergil's composition of the *Eclogues*, a whole greater than the sum of its parts, both because of the setting's frequent deployment in previous literature, from Homer to the Greek bucolic poetry of Theocritus, Moscus, and Bion, and because the landscape itself is not ultimately the essential ingredient. The indispensable feature of a *locus amoenus* is a positive relevance, emotional or aesthetic, of the natural setting to a human perspective. In other words, the place must be said to *feel* good.

I do not intend to argue that Vergil had the set phrase *locus amoenus* in mind whenever he embarked upon an idealized landscape description in his *Eclogues*.[63] I do, however, believe that

60 For a similar argument regarding laughter as a "cue" (in Vergil's *Eclogue* 3), see Chapter 2. There I propose that proximity, sequence, and location are particularly germane to the metacommunicative potential of the vocabulary of laughter and the risible.

61 See above (pp. 236-237) for a treatment of these verses.

62 Theocritus mentions water twice in the opening exchange of *Idyll* 1. The first mention in v. 2 (ποτὶ ταῖς παγαῖσι) refers only to the proximity of water, but the second in vv. 7-8 draws attention to the sound (τὸ καταχές / τῆν' ἀπὸ τᾶς πέτρας καταλείβεται ὑψόθεν ὕδωρ. The interlocutors, Thyrsis and the unnamed goatherd, enumerate many of what are later regarded as the requisite features of a *locus amoenus*.

63 Although the phrase is attested twice in the writings of Cicero (*de Fin.* 2.107 and *ad Att*. 12.19) and may have been in circulation as a set phrase, Cicero is not referring to a stable literary trope that aligns neatly with what is typical in pastoral poetry. The *locus amoenus* he describes to Atticus in the first sentence of *Epistle* 12.19 is *in*

Vergil considered topographical treatments to be part and parcel of his pastoral project, and that these treatments involve attention to a human experience rather than just an idealized description of nature. What I am proposing becomes clearer when one considers the second word in the designation that came to refer in later literature (although perhaps as early as Horace)[64] to these descriptions: *amoenus*. A *locus* is spatially determined, whether topographically (e.g., in geographic space) or literarily (e.g., in a place in a work of literature), but *amoenus* is an aesthetic designation. The setting is not beautiful unless accompanied by a human response that confirms it as such. Thus the creator of a literary *locus amoenus* must lean all the more heavily on those of Rumpf's *Bucolica nomina* that assign aesthetic value to a landscape, whether in part or as a whole.[65] For example, it is not enough to assert that because there are trees and grass, shade and streams, a *locus amoenus* is being described. The trees must be verdant, the grass soft, the shade cool, and the streams laughing. With the addition of aesthetically or emotionally resonant vocabulary, the reader is compelled to imagine herself *within* the *locus amoenus* and to consider both how it would feel and how it would make her feel.

One of the earliest occasions of a literary *locus amoenus* illustrates the argument. The description of the isle of Calypso in *Odyssey* 5.55-77 directs the reader's attention to the goddess' cave before turning to the surrounding woods, chirping birds, a lush vine, numerous springs, and flowers. All of the requisite landscape pieces of the *locus amoenus* are present. Yet the passage ends with an emphatic illustration of the aesthetic state that Hermes occupies in viewing the landscape:

mari ipso, a setting that aligns with no one of the *Eclogues* and perhaps only the Cyclops' seaside lament in *Idyll* 11.

64 Horace, with his mention of "rushing waters" (and perhaps even the "river Rhine") in *A.P.* 14-19, presents water as an integral component of "purple patches" of *topographia*. His diction, which includes *lucus* in v. 16, *amoenos* in v. 17, and *locus* in v. 19, even invites a verbal identification of these "patches" with descriptions of a *locus amoenus*.

65 Rumpf (2008) observes that a handful of adjectives (ἁδύς, καλός, and μαλακός) occur regularly in Theocritus (68 n. 6). The remainder of his article on "Bucolic *nomina*" examines the adjectives that occur considerably more frequently in Vergil's *Eclogues*.

ἀμφὶ δὲ λειμῶνες μαλακοὶ ἴου ἠδὲ σελίνου
θήλεον. ἔνθα κ' ἔπειτα καὶ ἀθάνατός περ ἐπελθὼν
θηήσαιτο ἰδὼν καὶ τερφθείη φρεσὶν ἧσιν.
ἔνθα στὰς **θηεῖτο** διάκτορος Ἀργεϊφόντης.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ πάντα ἑῷ **θηήσατο** θυμῷ,
αὐτίκ' ἄρ' εἰς εὐρὺ σπέος ἤλυθεν.

And, surrounding, soft meadows of violet and celery
were flourishing. And then after the immortal god entered,
he **wondered** while seeing and was delighted in his mind.
And then the messenger Argeiphontes stood and **wondered**.
But when indeed he had **wondered** in his heart at everything,
straightaway into the wide cave he went.

The Homeric poet takes pains to convey that Hermes is impressed. With θεάομαι, a semantic field broader than a basic sense of "to see" is suggested by the verb's juxtaposition with an unmarked participle for "seeing" (ἰδὼν) in v. 74, and the verb τερφθείη, appearing in syntactical parallel with θηήσαιτο, confirms that Hermes was pleased with what he beheld. The emphasis on internalization in v. 76 (ἑῷ θηήσατο θυμῷ) also implies a response beyond mere perception, Additional evidence of the importance of θεάομαι is its repetition. The verb is used three times in three verses (vv. 74-76), and nearly appears a fourth time: the use of θήλεον in v. 72 contains the same first syllable as the verb θηήσαιτο that appears at the start of the following verse. With the auditory near-pun, the Homeric poet blurs boundaries on the literal level between abundant growth and wondrous viewing.

Aesthetic terms appear throughout the landscape description that precedes (the mention of λειμῶνες μαλακοὶ—soft meadows—in v. 72 is one example), but the scene draws to a close by foregrounding the anthropomorphic god's reaction to the description. The verses detailing Hermes' viewing and appreciation of the landscape offer the reader an opportunity to share the experience. Hence, in this prototypical *locus amoenus*, a positive human (or human-like, in the case of Hermes) perspective is not merely conveyed but emphasized. And such an emphasis

becomes the *sine qua non* of subsequent landscape set-pieces. Here I return to the universal laughter of *Eclogue* 7. More important to the tone of the passage than implied shade and water, or explicit trees and scattered fruit, laughter plays the critical role of establishing a positive human perspective within the *locus amoenus* of vv. 53-56.

The description of nature in vv. 53-54 is devoid of positive aesthetically- or emotionally-resonant terms. Then, with the eruption of laughter in v. 55, the arboreal uprightness and scattered fruit in the previous verses are colored by a human emotional response and confirmed to be desirable. In other words, the *locus* becomes *amoenus* (or, more appropriately, *formosus*; Corydon names the beautiful—*formosus*—Alexis in the final feet of v. 55). The moment in which Corydon declares that everything laughs marks a pinnacle of pastoral fulfillment in his verses. Comprehensive pleasure and satisfaction occur in the immediate context of bountiful nature and amatory contentment. And things can only go downhill from here: the universal laughter is as positive and desirable as the hypothetical departure of Alexis and the ensuing drought are not. When everything laughs in the world of *Eclogue* 7, a *locus amoenus* is confirmed and a pastoral ideal is realized. This "laughter of place" creates and confirms the tone of its immediate context

The potential impact of these four verses and the one occasion of laughter contained therein may seem insignificant in the context of a poem of six pairs of traded quatrains, all of which are further nested in a narrator's frame of memory. It is to this framing layer that the reader is recalled in Meliboeus' second-to-last verse: "These things I remember, and that a conquered Thyrsis in vain contended."[66] The poem draws attention to itself as a recollected event, and it demands structural dissection and consideration in parts, not only between frame and recollection but between the parts of the recollection itself. I have thus far followed the general trend of scholarship on *Eclogue* 7 by treating a pair of quatrains (in my case, the fifth) in

66 *Ecl*. 7.69: *haec memini, et uictum frustra contendere Thyrsin.*

isolation from the others.[67] Before I turn to a second occasion of "laughter of place" in the *Eclogues*, I will explore how this laughter that occurs relatively late in *Eclogue* 7 (in v. 55 of 70) contributes to the tone of the poem more broadly—how it transcends its immediate quatrain and interacts with other sections of the poem. In a sense, I want to consider how this laughter may be read metacommunicatively.

In Chapter 2, I explain how two occasions of laughter early in *Eclogue* 3—the first explicit (in v. 9) and the second implied and following immediately (in v. 10)—ask the reader to become alive to the possibility that laughter is itself a desired response to the text. I conclude that this invitation is accepted by the text itself when it proceeds playfully through the agonistic badinage of the shepherds to a conclusion of shared, aporetic riddles. Whereas the laughter in vv. 9-10 of *Eclogue* 3 is understood to project a play frame onto the rest of the poem that follows (and to retroject one onto the 8 verses that precede), one hopes of *Eclogue* 7 that by v. 55, the tone of the poem has already been established.[68] The late-coming universal laughter of *Eclogue* 7 does not parallel that of *Eclogue* 3 precisely because it appears after much of the poem has already passed the reader by.

The laughter in v. 55 of *Eclogue* 7 is not itself the opening or, for that matter, the closing of a play frame but the maintenance of one that has already opened in *Eclogue* 7. If a reader zooms-out just enough from Corydon's fifth quatrain (vv. 53-56) to read it in tandem with his fourth (vv. 45-48), the laughter in v. 55 becomes the climax of a longer a set-piece.

> *muscosi fontes, et somno mollior herba,* 45
> *et quae uos rara uiridis tegit arbutus umbra,*
> *solstitium pecori defendite: iam uenit aestas*
> *torrida, iam lento turgent in palmite gemmae.*

67 In his article arguing that Corydon's sixth quatrain is a "technical knockout" in the poetic competition, Egan (1996) 238 compares the general scholarly tendency to a boxing match: "Many, if not most, interpreters have scored the contest as if it were something like a boxing match with Corydon winning some, but not necessarily all, rounds, or in some way accumulating a higher score over the whole course of the contest."

68 As in Chapter 2, p. 87, I use "play frame" colloquially and without the considerable weight of "play theory."

[. . .]
stant et iuniperi et castaneae hirsutae;
strata iacent passim sua quaeque sub arbore poma;
omnia nunc rident: at, si formosus Alexis
montibus his abeat, uideas et flumina sicca.

Mossy fountains and grass softer than sleep,
and green arbutus which protects with scattered shade, you all,
defend the herd from the solstice-sun! Already summer is coming
hot, already on the pliant bough buds swell.
[. . .]
Standing are both the junipers and the bristled chestnuts;
strewn everywhere there lies beneath each tree its own fruit;
everything now laughs: but if beautiful Alexis should
depart from these mountains, you would see even the rivers dry.

A *locus amoenus* begins to take shape in the first verses of Corydon's fourth quatrain. "Grass softer than sleep" (*somno mollior herba* in v. 45) describes a pastoral landscape feature of considerable pedigree, and it appears alongside explicit mention of water, trees and shade.[69] The remainder of the quatrain elucidates an imminent threat that the heat of summer poses to the vegetation.[70]

When one reads these two quatrains of Corydon in sequence, the landscape description in Book 5 of the *Odyssey* offers a neat parallel. Following the extensive cataloguing of the surrounds on Calypso's island, the Homeric poet highlights the thrice-pronounced effect of this landscape on Hermes. A divine experience of the landscape is given the "final word" after numerous topographical descriptions. Corydon's fourth and fifth quatrains, when read

69 Arnold (1995) 148 comments that *mollis* "defines as well as any other word the essence of Vergil's rustic Muse." See also Rumpf (2008) 67 n. 5 for *mollis* as a bucolic adjective. On this verse, Coleman (1977) and Clausen (1994) identify other occasions of "soft" and "sleep" appearing together in Theocritus, Homer, Lucretius, and elsewhere in Vergil.

70 There are both syntactical and topical parallels between the two quatrains. The movement in Corydon's fourth quatrain from idealized description to threat of summer heat resembles how, in the wake of the universal laughter in his fifth quatrain, the sense of pastoral fulfillment is threatened by the conditional departure of *formosus Alexis* and the drought that will accompany it. Both *loci amoeni* in the two quatrains are under threat, and, curiously, each threat offers an alternative portrait of the effects of intense heat. Additionally, the enjambment of the phrase *solstitium pecori defendite* (v. 47) between the second and third verse in the quatrain resembles the enjambment occurring in the same location in Corydon's fifth quatrain when the phrase *omnia nunc rident* seems to trespass on the verses about Alexis.

sequentially, chronicle a similar progression from description to impact. The laughter becomes the climactic human response not only in its own quatrain but extending from Corydon's preceding quatrain. This laughter, in its universality, is not an exclusively human response, but it remains a personification—an attribution of human behavior to nature.

This is simply to situate the laughter that appears late in *Eclogue* 7 in a slightly broader context, and to do so has required the potentially-objectionable practice of muting the intervening quatrain of an agonistic exchange. To situate and explain the universal laughter in v. 55 in the poem as a whole, the reader must look for evidence of playfulness or an invitation to laughter much earlier in the poem. Such evidence is offered in vv. 17-20 when the narrator Meliboeus transitions from the framing narrative to the contest itself:

> *posthabui tamen illorum mea seria ludo.*
> *alternis igitur contendere uersibus ambo*
> *coepere; alternos Musae meminisse uolebant.*
> *hos Corydon, illos referebat in ordine Thyrsis.* 20
>
> For all that, I postponed my serious things for their play.
> In alternating verses then they began both
> to contend; the Muses wanted to recall alternating verses.
> These Corydon, those Thyrsis was returning in sequence. 20

Meliboeus, having acknowledged that the significance of the competition (*certamen erat* [. . .] *magnum* in v. 16), professes his willingness to set aside his serious concerns for the time being. The proof is in the fifty verses to follow. Yet it is with his explicit mention of *ludus* in v. 17 that Meliboeus offers the verbal cue to open the play frame. The rules are established, and everything in the subsequent verses that adheres to those rules (which is to say everything but the return of Meliboeus in vv. 69-70) is part of "their play" (*illorum ludo*). Thus it is in the context of this frame that laughter in v. 55 is offered. When the competition has passed its midpoint and is approaching its conclusion, Vergil puts universal laughter in the quatrain of one of his players to serve as a reminder that the contest is a game in which *omnia nunc rident*.

Thus the "laughter of place" in *Eclogue* 7 is more aptly regarded as a "laughter of play," confirming and maintaining the tone established in Meliboeus' opening narrative frame when he refers to the poetic competition as a *ludus*. But I believe that certain preparations for the play frame are already underway in the verses leading up to its opening in v. 17. These preparations take the form of a topographical description. Daphnis alerts Meliboeus to shade (*umbra* in v. 10), offered by either the *ilex* in v. 1 or the *quercus* in v. 13. He also acknowledges the presence of water fit for livestock (v. 11), the verdant shores (*uiridis ripas* in v. 12) of the river Mincius (vv. 13-14), and the humming of bees (*resonant examina* in v. 13).[71] With that, Daphnis' description ends, but after three verses of deliberation, Meliboeus confirms that the setting will carry the light-hearted and positive valence of being a place of play. That is to say, he contributes the human response that frames the landscape as a *locus amoenus* or, more appropriately, a *locus ludibundus*.[72]

My detailed treatment of the "laughter of place" in *Eclogue* 7 and its relationship to the concept of the *locus amoenus* as a juncture of natural and emotional flourishing allows me to treat the second occasion of natural laughter more briefly. This laughter appears in v. 20 of *Eclogue* 4 and proves a fitting transition to the remainder of this exploration insofar as it shades gradually throughout the rest of the poem into the more ambiguous "laughter of character":

> *at tibi prima, puer, nullo munuscula cultu*
> *errantis hederas passim cum baccare tellus*
> *mixtaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho.* 20
> *ipsae lacte domum referent distenta capellae*
> *ubera, nec magnos metuent armenta leones;*
> *ipsa tibi blandos fundent cunabula flores.*
> *occidet et serpens et fallax herba veneni*
> *occidet; Assyrium vulgo nascetur amomum.* 25

71 Daphnis does not refer to honey, but this is a small leap from the presence of busy bees. Arnold (1995) 147 observes that "honey [. . .] is commonly associated in Theocritean bucolics with master singers and pastoral performances."

72 Cf. the *locus turbatus* with which a shepherd sharing his name is confronted in 1.11-18.

But first little gifts to you, boy, with no cultivation
the earth pours forth, wandering ivy everywhere with herbs
and lotus mixed with laughing acanthus.
The goats themselves carry home teats swollen
with milk, nor do flocks fear great lions;
To you, the cradle itself pours forth pleasing flowers.
Both the serpent will die and the herb deceitful with poison
will die; Assyrian amomum will be be born universally.

Although this passage begins with a topographical description that shares general features with the idealized pastoral setting examined in *Eclogue* 7, the flocks that are fearless of lions in v. 22 transport the reader to a different literary *topos*. *Eclogue* 4 does not describe an idealized location so much as an idealized atmosphere—a Golden Age.[73] Nevertheless, the concepts of the *locus amoenus* and Golden Age both hinge upon the construction of an ideal—"the joining of nature and man in the same state of felicity."[74] And the felicity that comes from a Golden Age must draw upon the idealization of a space as well as of a time. There exists a difference between these two *topoi*: their potential to be realized—a difference reflected in the divergent ways in which laughter is used throughout *Eclogue* 4 as compared to *Eclogue* 7.

The abundance of scholarship on *Eclogue* 4 testifies to the fundamental perplexities provoked by even a casual reading of the poem.[75] Who is the boy? When will this Golden Age dawn? That *Eclogue* 4 has provoked such a wide range of interpretations throughout its two thousand years of existence,[76] ranging from confident Roman historical claims[77] to readings that

73 Clausen (1994) begins his overview note on vv. 18-30, "The Golden Age was a time of ease and abundance, for the earth produced everything spontaneously [. . .]," and ends it "V. imagines a restoration of that golden time coincident with the birth and early manhood of the boy." See Baldry (1952) 87-92 for an argument that the "golden age" is an Augustan era recasting of the Hesiodic "golden race" (χρύσεον γένος) in *Works and Days* v. 109. Vergil, however, refers to a Hesiodic *gens aurea* in *Ecl*. 4.9.

74 Baldry (1952) 84.

75 The bibliography in Volk's (2008) "Oxford Readings" volume comprising influential papers on the *Eclogues* written in the past fifty years is among the most comprehensive.

76 If Servius (on *Eclogue* 4.11) is to be believed, the identity of the *puer* was contested as early as the generation following the publication of the *Eclogues*: *quidam Saloninum Pollionis filium accipiunt, alii Asinium Gallum, fratrem Salonini, qui prius natus est Pollione consule designato. Asconius Pedianus a Gallo audisse se refert, hanc eclogam in honorem eius factam.*

77 See Clausen's (1994) 121-122 confident assertion that a reader in Vergil's own time could not help but conclude that the child referred to is the (expected) offspring of Antony and Octavia.

draw on Messianic *qua* Sibylline prophecies,[78] reflects a curious balance in its indeterminacies: readers are granted enough information to feel that the mystery is solvable but not so much that any given solution has proved widely persuasive to subsequent interpreters. After setting forth in great detail one such potential solution, Du Quesnay (1976) eloquently summarizes the effect of the poem:

> The infinite variety and endless fascination of this poem perhaps lies more in the combination of its various elements than in any one aspect. It is an occasional poem; but because it concentrates on the emotions of the occasion rather than on historical facts it transcends the moment to become of universal and perennial interest. If a critic insists that a poem should contain within itself all that is necessary for understanding it, he would judge *Eclogue* 4 a failure. It has manifestly not failed as a poem, if we judge from the interest shown in it over two thousand years. The difficulties that do arise add to the interest and fascination [. . .].[79]

What Du Quesnay fails to observe is what Petrini (1997) notes almost in passing: "Vergil has purposely created enigmas [. . .]."[80] The point cannot be overstated. As I argue in my preceding treatment of laughter's role in several of Theocritus' *Idylls*, ambiguity is a cultivated effect in this literary work. Petrini's quotation invites the reader of *Eclogue* 4 to realize that the fundamental question needs to be not "Who is the boy?" or "When will the Golden Age dawn?" but "Why does the text make these questions seem so important?" or "Why are these questions left unanswered?" There are riddles undoubtedly built into the fabric of *Eclogue* 4. To acknowledge this while resigning oneself to the possibility that the riddles may be unsolvable, and deliberately so, effects an immediate change in the reader's experience. When the poem ceases to be a narrow question that requires a single answer, new questions can be asked to which the poem itself may already be a thoroughly convincing answer.

I return to this idea shortly when I examine the "laughter of character" occupying the

78 Nisbet (1978).

79 Du Quesnay (1976) 84.

80 Petrini (1997) 113. Northrop (1983) 111 volunteers reasons why Vergil might have intentionally left the identity of the child uncertain: "[. . .] first, because it would have enhanced the mystical tone of the entire piece; second, because it would have minimized his chances of offending any number of potentially important people.

final lines of *Eclogue* 4. The laughter in v. 20, as the second occasion of "laughter of place" in the *Eclogues* and one bearing a resemblance to the universal laughter in *Eclogue* 7, is a more straightforward affair: a sympathetic laugh appearing in a description of the natural world. That it reflects a positive emotional state is attested by its accompaniments and the circumstances of its appearance. The diminutive term *munuscula* (v. 18) indicates that the items to follow are welcome offerings, cute, little ones that are congruent with the age and size of their recipient. These vegetal gifts of ivy (*hedera*, v. 19), herbs (*baccar*, v. 19), lotus (*colocasium*, v. 20), and acanthus (v. 20) appear of their own accord (*nullo* [. . .] *cultu* in v. 18), a circumstance that, along with the goats that come to their milking unbidden (vv. 21-22) and the cradles that pour forth flowers (v. 23), thoroughly establishes the miraculousness of the boy.

Vergil's choice of plants has itself been regarded as pastorally significant,[81] but because the acanthus appears in a list with three other plants (two of which are also modified by participles), one hesitates to place special emphasis on one particular plant's description as "laughing" (*ridens*). Yet one scholar has done precisely this. In a short article published in *The Classical Review* in 1928, Ernest Robson sets forth a reading of the *ridenti acantho* that hinges upon "an element of humour in the main outline of the poem."[82] The humor he detects is vaguely situated, residing somewhere in an incongruity he detects between the first verses and the remainder of the poem: the speaker claims to wish to sing something "a little grander" (*paulo maiora* in v. 1) but he persistently conceives of his project in pastoral terms, as early as in the third verse ("If we sing of woods, let us sing woods worthy of a consul.") and again near the

81 Berg (1974) 172 "Not only are the flowers, herds, and smiles of traditional Greek pastoral present; motifs have also been cited from Vergil's previous works: the *hedera* and *baccar* from *Eclogue* 7.25-28, the *acanthus* from 3.45, and the *amomum* from 3.89." Northrop (1983) 118 quotes Thyrsis' verses on ivy and *baccar* in *Ecl.* 7.25-28 to support claims that, to Vergil, "ivy is the sign of a future poet" and that "baccar was effective at warding off the 'evil tongue.'" Arnold (1995) 152 asserts that "Vergil has given a specific pastoral coloring to the golden age theme by including a variety of plants [. . .]."

82 Robson (1928) 124.

poem's conclusion: “May even Pan say that he has been conquered with Arcadia as judge.”[83] Robson draws upon the humor he detects “in the outline” to explain the presence of “humour in some details,”[84] such as the perennially problematic self-dyeing sheep of vv. 42-45. He then turns his attention to the “laughing acanthus” of v. 20.[85]

I detail Robson's argument not because I find it persuasive in its specifics but because of how he deploys those specifics to support an interpretation that is far-reaching in its implications. The article's existence also provides anecdotal evidence of laughter's status as a provocation. Even a laugh that appears in a description of a plant warrants interrogation. The scholar claims to have, over the course of a season, “carefully examined four kinds of acanthus and seen nothing in habit leaf, flower, or fruit that would in any way suggest laughing or smiling” (124). Similar to the question of the child's identity that has vexed generations of readers of *Eclogue* 4, the term for laughter in v. 20 poses a question for Robson. But his answer, while purporting to explain the laughing acanthus, goes much further by situating this explanation in an “element of humour” that he reads into the poem as a whole. Thus Robson's argument pertains to tone; the laughing acanthus is appropriate to *Eclogue* 4 because the poem contains what he identifies in a *post script* as “sallies of humour.”[86]

My reservations about the equating of humor and laughter notwithstanding, Robson's alignment of *ridens* in v. 20 with his take on the prevailing tone of the poem models a variation on the correspondence between laughter and a playful tone for which I argue in the foregoing

83 v. 59: *Pan etiam Arcadia dicat se iudice victum.*

84 Robson (1928) 124.

85 Robson argues ingeniously that the mention of *acanthus* and *colocasium* is meant to conjure to the contemporary reader's mind the image of a wine-cup made of *colocasium* leaves and decorated with images of *acanthus*. Robson's vague explanation as to how this explains the participle *ridens* seems to be that the connection between laughter and wine (and the enjoyment thereof) is intuitive enough: “In such society the acanthus might well be described as 'ridens.'” Robson might have bolstered his argument with references to the “fluid” verb that Vergil uses for the earth's production of these plants (*fundet*) and to the participle *mixta*, so appropriate to a context of wine-preparation, that modifies *colocasia*.

86 Robson (1928) 124.

treatment of *Eclogue* 7. The laughing acanthus of v. 20 embodies a sympathy between the natural and human world—a localizing of positive emotion in an idealized place.[87] Its effect can perhaps be more easily understood through its imagined absence. If the acanthus were not "laughing" but, instead, "spreading" (*tendenti*) or, metrics aside, "greening" (*viridanti*),[88] the miraculousness of the other features in vv. 18-25 would in no way be diminished; homing goats, sheep fearless of lions, flowering cradles, and the death of all poison remain remarkable. Yet what is remarkable is not by default pleasant. The inexplicable can, under certain circumstances, take on the coloring of *adynata* that instill fear rather than pleasant wonder. Of course the passage from vv. 18-25 does not become apocalyptic in the absence of the laughing acanthus of v. 20. *Munuscula* in v. 18 and *blandos* in v. 23 both contribute a sense of pleasantness in the verses. The laughter of v. 20 simply establishes this pleasantness earlier and more infectiously. Its effect resonates beyond its immediate context precisely because the acanthus is not easily imagined to laugh; the unsuitability of the epithet (i.e., the "fallacy" of nature's pathetic response) compels the reader to transfer it elsewhere and interpret it more broadly. And so the laughing acanthus sets forth a guiding tone to precede the list of miracles, conveying to the reader that these miracles, at least during this stage in the child's development, can be observed with laughter on the lips because the nature itself laughs for the child.

SECTION IIB: WORLD CHANGING LAUGHTER IN *ECLOGUE* 4

Although the description of the Golden Age in *Eclogue* 4 begins with an occasion of "laughter of place," the ambiguous "laughter of character" dominates the poem's end. The pivot comes with the fact that a Golden Age, especially one as strange at Vergil's, is temporally as well as spatially located. A challenge peculiar to any attempted interpretation of the Golden Age of

87 Northrop (1983) 118: "[T]he 'laughing [*ridenti*] acanthus' reflects the sportive nature of the *Eclogues* as a whole."

88 I wonder if in the blending of *mixtaque ridenti*, one might hear hints of *uiridanti*: *mixtaq' u(i)rid(a)nti*?

Eclogue 4 is that its atypical dawning occurs in stages over the course of the poem. Williams (1974) summarizes the curiosity succinctly:

> In other writers Golden Ages were magical times: they existed, they ceased to exist, but one could not possibly imagine a Golden Age gradually coming into being, growing little by little, and no writer before Virgil conceived such a picture.[89]

Williams identifies "three installments" in Vergil's coming-of-Golden-Age narrative. After the first stage of the boy's infancy (vv. 18-25) is endowed with a sense of desirability by the "laughter of place" relayed through the acanthus in v. 20, the positive tone sustains itself through the narration of additional miraculous behavior by (and in) the landscape of the Golden Age's second stage. This installment coincides with the beginning of the boy's education (vv. 26-27), but his ability to read places him within a temporal, generational world that is aware of "praises of heroes and the deeds of his parent."[90] Any lingering effect of the laughter of v. 20 dissipates rapidly when the "few footprints of ancient crime" appear in v. 31.[91] Seafaring, city-building, agriculture, and wars follow in vv. 32-36, only to depart again after the boy reaches adulthood in the third and final installment of his (and the Age's) maturation (from vv. 37-45).[92] During and after this stage, wonders commence anew, from the self-coloring sheep in v. 42-45 to a firmament that nods approval in v. 50-51. Before the poet apostrophizes himself in v. 53, a command is given: "Look, how all things rejoice for the age to come!"—*aspice, uenturo laetantur ut omnia saeclo* (v. 52). The universalizing subject resembles that of *Ecl.* 7.55: *omnia nunc rident*, and, indeed, where rejoicing occurs, one might reasonably expect laughter to follow.

Laughter does follow, but it is not the "laughter of place." The "laughter of character" erupts twice in the concluding verses of the *Eclogue*:

89 Williams (1974) 39.

90 *Ecl.* 4.26-27: *at simul heroum laudes et facta parentis / iam legere et quae sit poteris cognoscere virtus* [. . .].

91 *Ecl.* 4.31: *pauca tamen suberunt priscae vestigia fraudis*. The temporal puzzle is foregrounded here, as the poet identifies the crime with the past: *priscae* [. . .] *fraudis*.

92 This fluctuation from Golden Age to Heroic Age and back again offers what I consider the best support for literary interpretations of the boy's identity (e.g., Berg (1974), Northrop (1983), and Arnold (1995)).

incipe, parue puer, risu cognoscere matrem; 60
matri longa decem tulerunt fastidia menses.
incipe, parue puer. qui non risere parenti,
nec deus hunc mensa dea nec dignata cubili est.

Begin, little boy, to recognize your mother with a laugh; 60
Ten months bore long bothers to your mother.
Begin, little boy. He who does not laugh for his parent,
neither a god deems him worthy of his table nor a goddess of her bed.[93]

The vocabulary in no way distinguishes itself from the vocabulary for laughter that appears elsewhere in Vergil.[94] All that has changed is the source; a human laughs rather than nature, and ambiguity takes hold of the verses. In his article "On Vergil *Eclogue* iv. 60-63," Stuart (1921) offers an apt summary of the effect that these lines have had in subsequent scholarship, and his observations remain accurate nearly a century later:

> It is the irony of fate that these four charming and tender verses, the meaning of which hinges on a question of "innocent merriment," should have proved to be a business so serious, should have evoked a volume of anything but lightsome discussion. However, the elusive shades of the poet's language, baffling to any unanimity of opinion, and the incidents of textual tradition have so ordered.[95]

I judge the sense of the passage to be clear enough: the boy is encouraged to laugh, first in explicit recognition of his mother in v. 60 (although the Latin and my translation preserve the possibility that the *risus* could be the mother's or the boy's), and then again in v. 62. In the second iteration of the command, the reader must supply the complementary infinitive noun clause *risu cognoscere matrem*, but the identical line beginnings of v. 60 and v. 62 suggest that the poet is establishing a refrain, familiar from Theocritean bucolic (*Id*. 2) and occurring elsewhere in the poetic book (*Ecl.* 8).[96] In place of the elided half of the refrain, the remainder of v. 62 and v. 63

93 I read Coleman's (1977) text of v. 62-63 (148-149). Stuart (1921) offers an approachable and thorough discussion of this textual crux along with an assessment of other scholars' readings of these verses (211 n. 1). Coleman's reading differs from Stuart's in the use of a dative *parenti* in v. 62 rather than the accusative *parentes*.

94 Cf. *risuque soluto* in *Georg.* 2.386 (discussed on p. 286, below) and *risere* in *Ecl*. 3.9 (discussed in Chapter 2). The syntax has received some attention but seems understandable as an occasion of *rideo* with the dative "as a sign of goodwill" (*OLD* s.v. *rideo* (2)).

95 Stuart (1921) 209.

96 Cf. the use of *incipe* at the beginning of the verse/refrain that repeats verbatim 9 times in Damon's first song.

explain why a child should laugh for his *parens*.[97] The significance of this explanation requires additional untangling, and the particular threads of this tangle are first spun in the aftermath of the Fates' song in Catullus' c. 64.

Correspondences between Catullus' c. 64 and *Eclogue* 4 have been numerously and thoroughly documented,[98] but I regard one, specific motif in Catullus' description of the Golden Age to be relevant to the laughter in the conclusion of *Ecl.* 4: the interaction between and "cohabitation" of the world by immortals and mortals.[99] In the final section of Catullus' poem (vv. 384-408), the narrator draws attention to the end of divine and human corporeal interactions. The location of the passage is important, and some scene-setting is in order. In v. 381, the Parcae conclude their prophetic song foreshadowing the birth of Achilles and the ruin that will come of it. The songs final verse is an imperative-led refrain (*currite* [. . .]). The transition in vv. 382-383 —*talia praefantes quondam felicia Pelei / carmina diuino cecinerunt pectore Parcae*—reminds readers that the previous 59 verses were the words of the Fates and that, with their song complete, what follows is voiced by the narrator.

Rather than quote the section in full, which details the occasions when gods would visit the earth before humans began to visit heinous crimes upon one another, I focus on the beginning and end of the passage:

> *praesentes namque ante domos inuisere castas* 384
> *heroum, et sese mortali ostendere coetu,*
> *caelicolae nondum spreta pietate solebant.*
> [. . .]
> *quare nec talis dignantur uisere coetus,* 407
> *nec se contingi patiuntur lumine claro.*
>
> For present, before, they were accustomed to look in on chaste homes 384

97 Quintilian cites vv. 62-63 at *Inst.* 9.3.8-9 as an occasion of *figura* [. . .] *in numero*. The compression of clauses in v. 63 also seems rhetorically self-conscious.

98 See, for example, Berg (1974) 165, Williams (1974) 45, Du Quesnay (1976) 28, Coleman (1977) 135, Arnold (1995) 149-151 and 153-155, Hubbard (1995b) *passim*, Petrini (1997) 115.

99 This circumstance of the Golden Age is alluded to in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (vv. 109-120).

of heroes and to show themselves to moral gatherings,
when piety for the heaven dwellers had not yet been scorned.
[. . .]
Wherefore they neither deign to look upon such gatherings 407
nor suffer themselves to be touched by bring light.

The bookending repetition of "gathering" (*coetus*) in vv. 385 and 407 confirms human-divine interaction as the focus of the passage, and the interactions that Catullus details in c. 64 seem to occur on an emphatically visual plane.[100] The verb *uisere* appears twice, the first time prefixed in v. 384 and the second in v. 407. As the gods view the houses of heroes and show themselves to mortals in vv. 384-385, their presence is felt visually rather than aurally or even physically.[101] After relations sour between vv. 397 and 406 because of persistent human injustice, the gods cease to look (v. 407) on humans and no longer allow themselves to be seen in daylight (v. 408).

The verb *dignantur* in v. 407 presents the intertextual link between Catullus' second-to-last verse in c. 64 and Vergil's final verse in *Eclogue* 4, and the *nec / nec* parallel constructions are also used in both texts: *nec deus hunc mensa dea nec dignata cubili est*—"[. . .] neither a god deems him worthy of his table nor a goddess of her bed."[102] Attempts have long been made to account for the mention of *mensa* and *cubile*, but many of these explanations suffer from either banality or inscrutability.[103] The poet of *Eclogue* 4, while allusive and mysterious, is neither trite nor so recherché as to be incomprehensible. But a straightforward interpretation of the verses,

100 Unless Catullus is being considerably more cheeky with the prefixed *inuisere* in vv. 384-385. The gods "look in on" the houses of heroes, but the verb may also carry the sense "to visit." Might these be sexual visits by the gods that lead to heroic offspring? An allusion to such inter-mortal dalliances while the adjective *castas* appears in the final foot of v. 384 and *coetus* in the final foot of v. 384 would be playful, but not so playful as to detract from the prevailing solemnity of c. 64's conclusion.

101 Verbs of seeing occur in the intervening verses: *revisens* (387) and *conspexit* (389).

102 Clausen (1994) 145 and Arnold (1995) 150 note in passing the textual similarities between the conclusions of the two poems.

103 Of the Servius of Daniel's explanation of the table and bed in v. 63 (*proinde nobilibus pueris editis in atrio domus Iunoni lectus Herculi mensa ponebatur*), Coleman (1977) rightly points out, "If this custom actually existed, an allusion to it here would be very flat; for what was commonplace among the Roman gentry would hardly be an honour worthy of this miraculous Child" (149). Having identified the banality in Servius' reading, Coleman volunteers an interpretation that draws upon a description of Hercules (buried) in the *Odyssey* (149), and Clausen (1994) agrees, labeling the table "a Hellenistic detail" and citing Nonnus (145).

such as that offered by Arnold (1995), proves eminently reasonable while preserving the exceptionality of the boy: "Just as Peleus shared a banquet with Jupiter and a marriage bed with the goddess Thetis in Catullus' poem, so also the *puer* is destined to exemplify that golden-age state where gods and men enjoy intimate social intercourse" (150). My reading is more general and does not restrict the comparison to the particular figure of Peleus: the poet describes two variations on potential *coetus* between a male human and gods of either sex—the social and the physical. The mention of gods of both sexes reveals the comprehensiveness of the realization of the Golden Age. The poet does not describe passing glances between a single god and the *Wunderkind* but the necessities of life in food and sex (or sleep).

What is absent from the closing verses of *Ecl*. 4 is any reference to vision, the sense-perception and means of interaction on which Catullus focuses in his final section. But vision is not absent from the poem as a whole. On the contrary, it receives particular attention in vv. 15-16 before the description of the Golden Age commences:

> *ille deum uitam accipiet diuisque uidebit* 15
> *permixtos heroas et ipse uidebitur illis* [. . .].
>
> That one will accept the life of the gods and with the gods will see 15
> heroes thoroughly mixed and he himself will be seen by them [. . .].

So comprehensive and immediate the communion between the boy and the gods from the beginning of v. 15 and the end of v. 16 that they are referred to by the same demonstrative pronoun (*ille* and *illis*), reflections of one another with a line of symmetry falling on the verb *accipiet* by which the boy will accept "the life of the gods." A mirroring effect is also achieved as the narrator weaves two occasions of *uidere* into two verses. The active and passive constructions indicate that the interaction—the *coetus*—between gods and human will not proceed in one direction, and the passive *uidebitur* in particular confirms the child's singular status. To witness the commingling of heroes and gods is exceptional enough; to *be witnessed* by

the gods is to attain a different status altogether.

The final four verses of *Eclogue* 4 thus hark back, in the first place, to the concluding section of Catullus c. 64 wherein the loss of the Golden Age is described as the breakdown in the relationships between gods and mortals and, in the second, to vv. 15-16 of *Eclogue* 4 wherein the dawning of the new Golden Age is characterized by the realization of interaction between gods and mortals. What remains to be situated in this triangulation of texts is the laughter of vv. 60 and 62:

> *incipe, parue puer, risu cognoscere matrem;* 60
> *matri longa decem tulerunt fastidia menses.*
> *incipe, parue puer. qui non risere parenti,*
> *nec deus hunc mensa dea nec dignata cubili est.*
>
> Begin, little boy, to recognize your mother with a laugh; 60
> Ten months bore long bothers to your mother.
> Begin, little boy. He who does not laugh for his parent,
> neither a god deems him worthy of his table nor a goddess of her bed.

This "laughter of character" can be located precisely in the middle of the triangle—a riddling end to a riddling beginning and middle, as if the poet has garnished an enigma with a concentrated dollop of ambiguity.[104] What I regard as the Theocritean effect of this "laughter of character," namely, the creation of a sense of realism as the reader engages with polyvalent laughter, also attains; Petrini (1997) deems the attention to the boy's physicality through his laughter to be an intrusion of realism at precisely the moment that the child should be transcendent.[105] The puzzling laughter thus dots the question mark that follows the unanswered (and unanswerable) question that first arises in v. 8, "Who is the *nascens puer* who will ring in the Golden Age?" In laughing in response to the impossible attempts to answer that question, the laughter provides the reader of *Eclogue* 4 with an answer to a different, but perhaps equally important, question: "How

104 And a sprig of laughing acanthus.

105 Petrini (1997): "Why recall the particulars of the mother's pregnancy and confirm the boy's ordinary, physical reality, just when we should be assured that he is an abstraction?" (114).

will the Golden Age begin?" With laughter, of course.

The end of *Eclogue* 4 presents the child's laughter as the prerequisite for the dawning of the Golden Age, although this does not become clear until the final line. The solicited laugh of v. 60 appears at first to be a plea for recognition by the child, yet by the following verse, it has taken on greater significance and is weighted with conveying a sense of gratitude for the mother's pains of pregnancy. In the final two lines, the laughter balloons in importance even more, becoming a sort of litmus test. For the child not to laugh for his parent is to stop the requisite circumstances of the Golden Age before they have begun; the gods would not deign to look upon a somber child who does not laugh for his parents. Not articulated by the poet but immediately intuitable is what this means for the alter-ego of the laugh-less child, namely, the child who laughs. The child who laughs for his parent—and the *puer* of *Eclogue* 4 may yet do so when the poem ends[106]—opens himself up to the possibility of communing with the gods, of sharing a table or a bed, of seeing the mixing of gods and men and of being seen. For the child of *Eclogue* 4, to laugh for his parent is, as the ellipsis of v. 62 suggests, simply to allow the Golden Age to begin: *incipe*.

SECTION III: PLAYING WITH THE REST OF THE PUZZLE IN VERGIL'S *ECLOGUES*

The final occasion in the *Eclogues* of the laughter of character appears in *Eclogue* 6. Two boys named Chromis and Mnasyllos (v. 13) bind Silenus in his drunken sleep. He wakes to address his captors, who are aided by a young Naiad named Aegle (vv. 19-20), before giving in to their demands:

> *adgressi (nam saepe senex spe carminis ambo*
> *luserat) iniciunt ipsis ex uincula sertis.*
> *addit se sociam timidisque superuenit Aegle.* 20

106 The *figura in numero* in v. 62 allows the poet to generalize for a clause and thus *not* to indict the specific *parue puer* when he explains the consequences of a child's *not* smiling.

Aegle, Naiadum pulcherrima, iamque uidenti
sanguineis frontem moris et tempora pingit.
ille dolum ridens: "quo uincula nectitis?" inquit.
"soluite me, pueri; satis est potuisse uideri.
carmina quae uoltis cognoscite; carmina uobis,
huic aliud mercedis erit." simul incipit ipse.

After they approach (for often with hope for a song the aged one had
gamed the two), they throw on fetters made of the wreaths themselves.
Aegle comes upon the fearful boys and adds herself as an ally.
Aegle, most beautiful of Naiads, with him already looking,
paints his face with blood-red berries and his temples.
He, laughing at the trick, says, "Why do you tie on fetters?
Release me, boys; it is enough for me to have been seen.
The songs which you want, hear them; songs for you two,
for this one, a different repayment." At once, he himself begins.

The *dolus* at which Silenus laughs in v. 22 is ambiguous, two possibilities presenting themselves in the immediate context. One is the nymph Aegle's painting of his face, explained by Coleman (1977) "as a way of subduing the supernatural creature to the will of mortals and pacifying his wrath" (181).[107] Thus the nymph's painting accomplishes a form of pacification that preempts all but a favorable response from Silenus—a trick (*dolus*) to the extent that he is ritually subdued while physically restrained. A second possible referent of the "trick" is the ambush itself, accomplished by the *pueri* while their victim drunkenly sleeps. On this reading, the trick could refer even more specifically to the boys' creative appropriation of the wreaths that have already fallen far from Silenus' head (v. 16) at the time that they first see him.

Although Aegle's actions are presented immediately before the narrative focuses upon Silenus, the captive's first words—question and command alike—refer to his bindings, indicating that these occupy the bulk of his attention. He identifies the *pueri* as his addressees with a vocative in v. 24 and continues to speak exclusively to them through v. 25, wherein he indicates that the song they have desired is forthcoming. Aegle is also promised a reward for her

107 Clausen (1994) more meanderingly refers to the face painting as "a common trick" played upon drunk victims, as a comic resonance *via* the typically-Plautine phrase *os alicui sublinere* (meaning "to trick someone"), or as a customary practice in rustic celebrations of Bacchus (185-186).

participation in v. 26, a promise that Servius interprets as a masked sexual threat.[108] Ultimately the *dolus* may be seen to encompass the entire situation of the ambush, from the impromptu restraints used by the boys to Aegle's artistic contribution. The detail indispensable for any reader attempting to determine the tone of the passage, however, is Silenus' reaction, which reveals his disposition and thus confirms that the stakes of his unwilling capture are not such that any wrath should be anticipated. On the contrary, the captors are immediately offered what they are said to have long sought.

Silenus' laughter nevertheless contributes a sense of mystery and otherworldliness to the opening frame of *Eclogue* 6 as the reader is left to puzzle what kind of character responds in such a way to being ambushed while sleeping. He wakes up from his inebriated slumber without any apparent ill-effects, but, to the contrary, with a laugh, a fact that Coleman (1977) regards as "proof of his supernatural constitution,"[109] The colorful detail that at the time of his capture, Silenus is "swollen in the veins, as always, with yesterday's wine"[110] stresses that his previous encounter with alcohol was far from a moderate one. Yet while still restrained, Silenus laughs and then in the following two lines deploys two imperatives (*soluite* in v. 24 and *cognoscite* in v. 25) and threatens (under Servius' reading) the nymph Aegle. Despite his apparent bindings, Silenus behaves as if in a position of authority.

This incongruity is less striking when considered in its already fantastic narrative context. The location of Silenus' ambush and subsequent song is never specified, but the episode must be understood to occur in a *quasi*-Golden Age space wherein *pueri* like Chromis and Mnasyllos can come into contact with—can "see" (*uidere* in v.14)—an immortal figure overcome by the effects of wine. An emphasis on sight and seeing, similar to the one occurring in vv. 15-16 of *Eclogue* 4

108 Servius *Ecl*. 6.26.1-2: *nymphae minatur stumprum latenter*.

109 The opening verses of Persius *Sat*. 3 offer what is perhaps a more familiar account of the mindset of one who may have overindulged the previous day or night.

110 *Ecl*. 6.1.15: *inflatum heterno uenas, ut semper, Iaccho.*

and the conclusion of Catullus' c. 64, continues throughout the quoted passage of *Eclogue* 6, both when the narrator Tityrus notes that Silenus watches Aegle (*uidenti* in v. 21) paint him and when Silenus cryptically tells the boys in v. 24, "[I]t is enough for me to have been seen."[111] Thus Silenus' laugh, especially if *Eclogue* 6 is read after the invitation to laughter in the final verses of *Eclogue* 4, carries with it undertones of his divine status. Just such an exceptional, unnatural figure can laugh even when bound.[112]

The laughter of Silenus, like many of the laughs and smiles in Theocritus' *Idylls* (particularly those of Lycidas in *Id*. 7) and the laugh of the *puer* in *Eclogue* 4, invites the reader to pause for a moment and ponder the possible reasons for laughter at this point in the poem. The mysterious behavior coupled with the indefinite atmosphere colors the narrative with just enough detail to remind a reader of the ambiguities that often unfold in everyday occurrences of laughter. *Eclogue* 6, however, has already taken the reader outside of the norm of "everyday occurrences." If the familiar interaction of two deities—i.e., a sleeping Silenus and an ambush-aiding Aegle—with two boys does not indicate this sufficiently, the reader is invited to imagine that, had she been there for Silenus' song, she would have *seen* other extraordinary happenings as soon as he began singing:

> *tum uero in numerum faunosque ferasque uideres* 27
> *ludere, tum rigidas motare cacumina quercus.*
>
> Then truly you would have seen fauns and wild beasts 27
> playing in rhythm, then rigid oaks moving their tops.

111 The ambiguity of this statement is noted in Servius and by most readers since. Some scholars (e.g., Heyne: '*ut uideamini me uincire potuisse*') wish to understand an ellipsed complementary infinitive with *uideri*, while others (e.g., Coleman (1977)) read it as I do and supply in translation an ellipsed *mihi*. There are problems with either reading. Heyne and others (like Clausen (1994)) might be asked why Silenus would need to demand his release if the boys only *seem* to have been able to bind him. Against my reading, the narrative provides the detail in vv. 18-19 that Silenus had "often" (*saepe*) deluded the boys with hope of a song, suggesting that this was not a one-off encounter between the trio.

112 Cf. the smile Dionysus offers after being captured by pirates in the opening lines of the Homeric Hymn to Dionysus (*Hom. Hymn* 7.14-15). The bonds fall from his limbs as the pirates attempt to restrain him, and then he sits down, "smiling with his dark eyes" (ὁ δὲ μειδιάων ἐκάθητο / ὄμμασι κυανέοισι.)

These are not the sympathetic natural happenings of a pathetic fallacy. *Fauni* are said to have been visibly present, moving in time (*in numerum*) with wild beasts to Silenus' production. As narrator, Tityrus draws additional attention to the fantastic nature of the occurrences with *tum uero* at the beginning of v. 27, as if declaring "No, really . . .", immediately before offering the most outlandish details of his story. The movement of the trees in v. 28 is less marvelous in light of the sympathetic behavior observed in trees elsewhere in the *Eclogues*[113] (one can easily imagine treetops swaying in a breeze), but the explicit attention to the otherwise rigid nature of these oaks does lend their movement an air of the extraordinary. Ultimately, the addition to the narrative of more sylvan deities, the *fauni* of v. 27*,* serves as yet another reminder, following Aegle's appearance and Silenus' laughter, that the world of *Eclogue* 6 is home to preternatural occurrences.

And the preternatural occurrences do not originate with the narrative of the capture of Silenus in v. 13. Tityrus, the poem's narrator, recounts in vv. 3-5 a personal interaction that he shared with the god *Cynthius* (Apollo) after implying a familiar relationship (*nostra* [. . .] *Thalia* in v. 2) with the presumably divine Thalia[114] in the poem's opening couplet:

> *prima Syracosio dignata est ludere uersu*
> *nostra, neque erubuit siluas habitare, Thalia.*
> *cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthius aurem*
> *uellit, et admonuit: "pastorem, Tityre, pinguis*
> *pascere oportet ouis, deductum dicere carmen."* 5
> *nunc ego (namque super tibi erunt, qui dicere laudes,*
> *Vare, tuas cupiant, et tristia condere bella)*
> *agrestem tenui meditabor harundine Musam.*

113 Cf. the learned echoing of the woods in *Eclogue* 1.5 and the drooping of trees and calling of Tityrus in vv. 36-39.

114 The identity of Thalia is complicated by the fact that this seems the earliest, undisputed appearance of the name in extant Latin literature. Some scholars conjecture, based upon Servius' note on *Ecl.* 1.57, that Cicero composed an elegiac poem entitled *Thalia Maesta*, but the Servian text is uncertain. To the extent that later iconography of the muse Thalia associates her with the grinning, comic mask, I can only assume that had a Ciceronian poem with the title *Thalia Maesta* survived to the present, it would have featured in my study. The Greek term θαλία appears throughout Homer with the sense of "abundance." The proper name Θάλεια appears in reference to one of the Muses (although not associated with any particular genre) in Hesiod *Theogony* v. 77.

First in a Syracusan verse she deigned to play,
our Thalia, nor did she blush to inhabit the woods.
When I was singing of kings and battles, Cynthius plucked
my ear and urged: "The shepherd, Tityrus, ought
to pasture plump sheep, to sing a fine-spun song."
Now I (for there will be a surfeit to you, Varus, who desire
to speak your praises and to compose sad wars)
will ponder the rustic Muse with a slender reed.

The *recusatio* in these verses has received no small share of scholarly attention, but the substance of the *recusatio* is less relevant to the current discussion than the dramatic circumstances in which it appears.[115] The temptation is to focus upon the *recusatio* as Vergil's own rather than that of the internal narrator Tityrus.[116] This aligns with a tendency to identify Tityrus as a stand-in for Vergil throughout the *Eclogues*[117]—an identification that Vergil himself seems to invite when he has Tityrus, speaking in the first-person, address a familiar "Varus." The distinctively Roman name is in tension with the Greek atmosphere established by the speaker's own name *Tityrus* and the names identifying the divine figures *Thalia* and *Cynthius*; "Varus" adds a particular layer of ambiguity insofar as the name belongs to a late-Republican contemporary of Vergil.

The fluctuations in narrative voice would be disorienting even if Tityrus were not to claim physical and aural contact with the god. When this occurs in vv. 3-4 (despite the fact that Tityrus makes no reference to having *seen* Apollo), the Golden Age *coetus* of mortals and gods is realized nonchalantly. Cynthius enters the mortal realm to address the narrator by name and to offer gnomic wisdom, and Tityrus ostensibly takes this wisdom to heart and announces in vv. 6-8 (with a parenthetical aside to Varus), "[N]ow [. . .] I will ponder the rustic Muse with a slender

115 See Lyne (1995) 31-39 on Latin *recusationes* with accompanying bibliography.
116 E.g., Coleman (1977) casually states that "Vergil is addressed by the name of the typical lowly herdsman" (176).
117 Ovid's *Amores* 1.15.25-26 suggests that this identification may have been in effect as early as the generation after Vergil's composition of the *Eclogues*. The speaker lists his poetic predecessors by name but refers to Vergil without using his name but seemingly using that of Tityrus: *Tityrus et segetes Aeneiaque arma legentur / Roma triumphati dum caput orbis erit [. . .]*. It is also possible that *Tityrus* is being used metonymically for the *Eclogues* as a whole (just as *segetes* and *arma* appear in the first lines of the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*, respectively.)

reed." Thus even before the fantastic exchange commences in vv. 13 between the boys, Silenus, and the nymph Aegle, the narrator Tityrus invites the reader of *Eclogue* 6 into a surreal universe that bears a distinguishing feature of the Golden Age: familiar interaction between mortals and immortals.

Additional situational parallels between the opening verses of the *Eclogue* and the beginning of the narrator's internal song on the capture of Silenus offer themselves for consideration. In both episodes, an individual is physically accosted. The plucking of Tityrus' ear by Apollo is less invasive than the restraining of Silenus while he sleeps, but Tityrus' attention to the god is nevertheless compelled through the physical contact. Similarly, Silenus is forced by the impromptu fetters the boys fashion from wreaths to attend to their hope for a song. In neither case is the compulsion hostile. The interactions shade toward playfulness, and a form of figurative binding seems the ultimate objective behind each occasion of physical contact. Each act of binding ultimately bears fruit. Even though Apollo's restrictions are offered in an enigmatic, impersonal pronouncement on the proper song-material for a shepherd, Tityrus proceeds as if "bound" by the restrictions in vv. 6-8.[118] Likewise, the boys Chromis and Mnasyllos trap Silenus with the goal of eliciting a song from him, and the haphazard nature of their bindings confirms that physical restraint is only the means to an end that is realized as soon as Silenus begins singing. The focus on song is maintained throughout the two episodes. Those initiating the physical contact have poetic-musical motivations, and those being contacted have poetic-musical talents. Thus the status of *Eclogue* 6 as a poem about poetry is revealed in these inset episodes as well as the remaining verses.[119]

118 Much of the meaning of *Cynthius*' words is conveyed through the frame in which they are presented. The god says nothing about kings and battles (*reges et proelia*); the reader learns that these are not the material of "fine-spun song" when Tityrus announces his change of topic in vv. 6-8.

119 Stewart (1959) summarizes preceding scholarly readings of Silenus' song in *Eclogue* 6 and states that an identification of Silenus' verses as "a literary catalog" is "the only balanced and inclusive view of the song" (183). Scholarship since Stewart has regularly taken this point for granted (See, e.g., Elder (1961), Leach

Verbal repetitions and parallels between the passages reinforce the playful self-reference at work in the situational parallels of human-divine interaction, physical compulsion, and song-solicitation. In fact, all three of the selections quoted from *Eclogue* 6 in the preceding pages (vv. 18-26, vv. 27-28, and vv. 1-8) share, along with their mentions of divine beings appearing in the human world, references to play. The verb *ludere* occurs three times in the first thirty verses (*ludere* in v. 1, *luserat* in v. 19, and *ludere* in v. 28) of *Eclogue* 6. Together with the vocabulary of laughter in v. 23, this terminology of play establishes the light-hearted tone of the poem and, because of this poem's special status as a declaration of program at the midway point of the *Eclogues*, of the Vergilian pastoral collection as a whole. I conclude this chapter with a consideration of the overlap of laughter and play in Vergil's first poetic book.

I draw upon the idea of the "play frame" in my treatment of *Eclogue* 3 in Chapter 2 and previously in this same chapter in my treatment of *Eclogue* 7**.** In Chapter 2, I assert that the laughter of the nymphs in v. 9 opens for the reader a frame of playfulness that is sustained throughout the poem and culminates in the unanswered riddles at the poem's conclusion. The tone of playfulness persists amid more serious, amatory concerns that are raised near the end of the *Eclogue*, and though the sense of play fades on occasion in the poem, it is never altogether eclipsed. Earlier in this chapter, I propose that a play frame is opened in *Eclogue* 7 by the vocabulary of play appearing early in the poem and then is reinforced by the vocabulary of laughter nearly forty verses later. I would like to propose a similar argument now of *Eclogue* 6. I began the current examination of *Eclogue* 6 through the lens of Silenus' laughter in v. 23, but I one can approach this laughter from a different angle—as a symptom rather than the cause. By the time Silenus laughs (*ille dolum ridens*), a frame of play has already been opened at the very beginning of the poemwith the vocabulary of play itself:

(1968), and Breed (2000a)).

prima Syracosio dignata est ludere uersu
nostra, neque erubuit siluas habitare, Thalia.

First in a Syracusan verse she deigned to play,
our Thalia, nor did she blush to inhabit the woods.

As I mention previously, these verses presume something akin to the Golden Age interaction between humans and gods. Tityrus speaks of Thalia as his—"our"—own and places her among the *siluae* of a presumably mortal sphere. The finite verb *dignata est* in v. 1 is the same verb that appears in the final verse of *Ecl*. 4 when the *coetus* of gods and humans is previously hypothesized: *nec deus hunc mensa dea nec dignata cubili est*—"[. . .] neither a god deems him worthy of his table nor a goddess of her bed." Tityrus nonchalantly presents himself as one with whom the goddess deigns to commune. Although she does not share in his bed, she willingly plays in and inhabits his poetic realm.

With *ludere uersus* following the bucolic diaeresis of the first verse, Vergil orients the reader toward a consideration not merely of poetry but of a particular kind of poetry. Servius remarks of *Syracosius*, the adjective modifying *uersus*, that Vergil uses the geographical epithet "because he follows Theocritus in particular, although many others wrote bucolic poems."[120] Servius then glosses the phrase *siluas habitare* as "to imitate Theocritus the Syracusan and to write bucolic."[121] It is no coincidence that the Servian text seems particularly attuned to considerations of genre in this opening couplet. Vergil, in the voice of Tityrus, is ticking the boxes of poetic self-consciousness. Poetic primacy is claimed in the first word *prima*, and the naming of the Muse at the conclusion of the second verse gestures, as if in direct address, toward an invocation that would be immediately realized if the verbs were in the second-person. The mention of *siluae*, I believe to be considerably more representative of specific generic trends

120 Serv. *Ecl.* 6.1.2-3: *quia Theocritum praecipue sequitur, quamuis multi alii bucolica scripserint*.
121 Serv. *Ecl.* 6.1.6-7: *[. . .] id est imitari Theocritum Syracusanum et bucolica scribere*.

than previous scholars have noted,[122] but I first wish to consider the verb *ludere*.[123]

In an article translated into English in 1956 but originally published in Dutch in 1935, Hendrik Wagenvoort writes of the "Ludus Poeticus" in such a comprehensive and methodical way, compiling quotations from Catullus to Gellius of the term of *ludere* (and its derivatives) and assembling his arguments in clear outline, that one begins to understand why little more than notes in commentaries have been published on the topic in the intervening decades.[124] His conclusion nevertheless leaves something to be desired:

> *Ludus* and *ludere* referring to verse-making point to a relative notion of variable import, which as a rule can only be determined by the establishment of the other notion to which it stands in relation and contrast. It may indicate playful or trifling versifying in contrast to serious, true poetry, but also true poetry of a lighter nature in contrast to epics and tragedies as a superior kind; it may even—though only in very exceptional cases—include the whole of poetry in contrast to a political life-work, considered as the more important. Hence the inaccuracy of the assertion that the Romans should have considered all poetry as a mere game.[125]

The most dangerous phrases in Wagenvoort's assessment may seem those of a qualitative and comparative nature—"true poetry" and "a superior kind"—but his argument suffers not so much from these comparisons to tragedy and epic as from the fact that the conclusion is rather unsurprising. That *ludere* operates in "relation" to something else seems to reflect a commonsense approach to "play," in much the same way that laughter is juxtaposed in texts against seriousness or sadness.[126] Indeed, the very notion of a "play frame" presumes that something exists outside of (or perhaps within) that frame. One takes for granted, therefore, that *ludere*, whether in reference to poetic composition or other topics, reflects a "relative notion."

---

122 Quint. 10.3.17: *Diuersum est huic eorum uitium qui primo decurrere per materiam stilo quam uelocissimo uolunt, et sequentes calorem atque impetum ex tempore scribunt: hanc siluam uocant. Repetunt deinde et componunt quae effuderant: sed uerba emendantur et numeri, manet in rebus temere congestis quae fuit leuitas.*

123 Of *Ecl*. 10.1, Servius offers a surprising explanation of Vergil's use of the term *laborem*: *nam scribere apud poetas ludus est, ut "et ipsum ludere quae uellem" [. . .]*.

124 See, e.g., Nisbet-Hubbard (1989) on Horace's *Odes* 1.32.2 and Clausen (1994) on *Ecl*. 1.10.

125 Wagenvoort (1956) 39.

126 See the introduction, pp. 31-32 on the laughable (τὸ γελοῖον) and the serious (τὸ σπουδαῖον) as relative notions in Plato's *Phlb*. 30e6-7.

The shortcomings in Wagenvoort's conclusion reflect, on the one hand, the position that prompts his argument and, on the other, the enormous body of literature he examines. To treat the "other" hand first, it seems unreasonable to expect the notion of poetic play to have remained stable through centuries of literature and various metrical types of poetry, especially during the politically tumultuous centuries witnessing the transition from Republic to Empire and the accompanying transitions in literary tastes and (at times) permissions. As for the position of Wagenvoort's "opponents," he quotes contemporaries, namely, Kroll and Immisch, as asserting that poetic composition was a *ludus*. He does not argue against this position so much as refine it to assert that a *ludus* can be serious business, just never the *most* serious.

All three occasions of *ludere* that Vergil writes into *Eclogue* 6 fall under the scope of the *ludus poeticus*, and they collectively construct the frame of play in the poem. As discussed previously *via* Servius, poetic terminology resonates throughout the opening two verses. Tityrus confirms the poetic valence of *ludere* by packaging it with *uersus* in the final two feet of the first line, and this is where the play frame initially opens. In vv. 18-19, Tityrus refers to song (*carmen*) in his framing narrative of the capture of Silenus when he explains why the boys wish to bind the old god: "[. . .] for often with hope for a song the aged one had / gamed the two."[127] Although the way in which Silenus disappoints the boys is not specified, the proximity of *carmen* colors the context poetically: he "played" the boys by not offering them the poetic play they desired (and I like to think he may have deceived them with riddling, poetic speech). The vocabulary of play reminds the reader of the wider play frame and is soon thereafter reinforced by the vocabulary of laughter when Silenus laughs in v. 23. The final explicit reminder of the play frame occurs when the fauns and wild beasts are imagined to be playing in vv. 27-28, and the term *ludere* again appears. They play in sympathetic rhythm (*in numerum*) with Silenus'

127 *Ecl.* 6.18-19: *nam saepe senex spe carminis ambo / luserat*.

performance.[128]

The collocation *in numerum* [. . .] *ludere* registers not only through context as a reference to dance but, by way of Catullus' c. 50, as an additional allusion to poetic play:

> *hesterno, Licini, die otiosi*
> *multum lusimus in meis tabellis,*
> *ut conuenerat esse delicatos:*
> *scribens uersiculos uterque nostrum*
> *ludebat numero modo hoc modo illoc,*
> *reddens mutua per iocum atque uinum.*[129]
>
> Yesterday, Licinius, at leisure and
> in abundance we played in my notebooks,
> as it had been agreed to be refined:
> writing little verses, each of us
> was playing, now in this number, now in that,
> repaying loans in joke and wine.

Catullus emphasizes that his and his addressee's compositions were committed to the page (*in meis tabellis* in v. 2 and *scribens uersiculos* in v. 4), but in *Eclogue* 6, the narrator Tityrus allows *ludere* wider range. The Vergilian play operates on a written, literary plane (*ludere uersu* in v. 1), a seemingly verbal one (*spe carminis ambo* / *luserat* in vv. 18-19), and a visual one (*uideres* / *ludere* in vv. 27-28). And as if to destabilize the early mention of *uersus*, Tityrus stresses in vv. 3-11 the oral aspect of his poetic endeavors with verbs denoting song and speech: *canerem* in v. 3, *dicere carmen* in v. 5, *dicere* in v. 6, *cano* in v. 9, and *canet* in v. 11. He delays until the end of his pseudo-dedicatory opening any additional references to reading (*leget* in v. 10) or writing (*praescripsit* and *pagina* in v. 12).

The poetic play that Vergil portrays in the opening of *Eclogue* 6 is not so firmly rooted in the sphere of written composition as that of Catullus' c. 50, and, consequently, the play itself can

128 Cf. Leach (1968) 28: "What before had been the limited and personal activity of the Eclogue poet is now the animated yet orderly response of nature to song. Song raises nature from its ordinary inanimation and raises it to something nearer the human level. The activity of the poet thus shifts from a self-contained world of literature and literary terms to the wider sphere of nature."

129 I believe that *reddens* in v. 6 must be a pun on *ridens*.

continue for as long as script, song, or speech does. In *Eclogue* 6, the written poem is all but coterminous with the sung one, and Silenus' song remains the focus of the rest of the *Eclogue*, never quoted verbatim but paraphrased until v. 81. When Silenus stops singing,[130] one imagines that the trees stop swaying, the fauns and wild animals cease their rhythmic play to return to their lairs, and the boys and Silenus part ways. But the reader of *Eclogue* 6 never sees these things occur. The final sentence of the poem (vv. 84-86) begins with Silenus still singing (*canit* in v. 84), his surroundings echoing (*pulsae referunt ad sidera ualles* in v. 84), and even Olympus resisting the end of the song and the simultaneous close of the play frame.

Much more could be said about the function of play in poetry in general, but this would be to embark upon another study altogether, albeit one that dovetails with my current exploration of laughter. I must content myself with two final assertions: 1) that Vergil portrays play, *via* the word *ludere*, as an indicator of his bucolic project in *Eclogue* 1 and, consequently, the rest of the book; and 2) that the Vergilian *ludus* of the *Eclogues* operates in conjunction with laughter to comprise and, in a sense, assemble a recurring section of the puzzle of Vergil's bucolic genre.

Echoing Servius' sensitivity to genre in his notes on the opening lines of *Eclogue* 6 (quoted previously) and pointing to some of the very same words and phrases, Zeph Stewart (1959) recognizes a "characterization" of bucolic in the terms *Syracosio uersu*, *siluas*, *deductum carmen*, *agrestem Musam*, *tenui harundine*, *ludere*, and *meditabor*.[131] Stewart does not need to explain the basis of this characterization. Although many of the words recur throughout the *Eclogues*, a reader of the opening of *Eclogue* 1 will quickly tally several of the words in Stewart's list:

Meliboeus
Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi

130 Where the song concludes and the narrator resumes is the source of some disagreement. See Stewart (1959) 196.
131 Stewart (1959) 197.

siluestrem tenui Musam meditaris auena;
nos patriae fines et dulcia linquimus arua.
nos patriam fugimus; tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra
formosam resonare doces Amaryllida siluas.

Tityrus

o Meliboee, deus nobis haec otia fecit.
namque erit ille mihi semper deus, illius aram
saepe tener nostris ab ouilibus imbuet agnus.
ille meas errare boues, ut cernis, et ipsum
ludere quae uellem calamo permisit agresti.

Meliboeus

Tityrus, as you recline beneath the shadow of the sprawling beech,
you ponder the woodland Muse with a thin pipe;
we are leaving the borders of our fatherland and sweet lands.
We are fleeing our fatherland; you, Tityrus, at ease in the shade
are teaching the woods to echo beautiful Amaryllis.

Tityrus

O Meliboeus, a god made these leisures for us.
For he will always to me be a god, his altar
a tender lamb from our folds will often soak.
He has permitted my cattle to roam, as you see, and myself
to play what I wish with my rustic reed.

For ease of comparison, I offer again the first eight verses of *Eclogue* 6:

prima Syracosio dignata est ludere uersu
nostra, neque erubuit siluas habitare, Thalia.
cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthius aurem
uellit, et admonuit: "pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
pascere oportet ouis, deductum dicere carmen."
nunc ego (namque super tibi erunt, qui dicere laudes,
Vare, tuas cupiant, et tristia condere bella)
agrestem tenui meditabor harundine Musam.

First in a Syracusan verse she deigned to play,
our Thalia, nor did she blush to inhabit the woods.
When I was singing of kings and battles, Cynthius plucked
my ear and urged: "The shepherd, Tityrus, ought
to pasture plump sheep, to sing a fine-spun song."
Now I (for there will be a surfeit to you, Varus, who desire
to speak your praises and to compose sad wars)
will ponder the rustic Muse with a slender reed.

The similarities in diction and tone are apparent. For example, the long-recognized parallels between *Eclogue* 6.8 and *Eclogue* 1.2 are representative of many others:

Ecl. 6.8: *agrestem tenui meditabor harundine Musam.*

Ecl. 1.2: *siluestrem tenui Musam meditaris auena*.

There are five words in each verse, three terms shared between both verses (*tenuis*, *Musa*, and *meditor*), two of these appearing in the same morphological form (*tenui* and *Musam*), and one occurring in the same location in the verse (*tenui*).[132] In addition to adopting a synonymous term for "reed" (*harundo* for *auena*) and shifting the person and tense of *meditor* (first-person future for second-person present[133]), *Eclogue* 6 also alters the landscape with which the Muse is identified (*agrestis* for *siluestra*) and marks the change by placing the respective terms first in their verses.[134]

Other parallels exist between the two passages, and because of the poetic self-consciousness of these parallels and the locations of the passages in which they occur, namely, at the beginning and midway point of the collection, a case can be—and has been[135]—made for the programmatic relevance of passages and parallels alike. I have already demonstrated that *ludere* in *Ecl*. 6.1 is embedded among numerous other bucolic sign-posts at the beginning of that poem. Because this same term for play (*ludere*) offers itself as another verbal parallel in the opening of *Eclogue* 1, I contend that the concept of play is fundamental (although not exclusively so) to the generic identity of the *Eclogues* as a whole.

---

132 These are the only two lines in the whole of the *Eclogues* in which Vergil uses *tenuis*.

133 The shift in person also confirms, to my thinking, one of the many fine arguments outlined by Alpers (1977) in his chapter "*Eclogue 1*: An Introduction to Vergilian Pastoral." Alpers argues that the shepherds Tityrus and Meliboeus "sing each other's songs" (95) in *Eclogue* 1 and thus present complementary and dependent "versions of pastoral." Although Alpers does not employ this observation as proof, Meliboeus sings the words in *Ecl*. 1.2 that Tityrus claims for himself in *Ecl.* 6.8.

134 I do not think that a different muse is meant but believe the alteration is nonetheless deliberate. Cf. Lucretius' use of *siluestrem* [. . .] *Musam* (4.589) and *agrestis* [. . .] *Musa* (5.1398) to refer to what appears to be the same pastoral muse. That similar semantic fields are indicated by *siluestra* and *agrestis* in the Lucretian text is confirmed by Lucretius' use of *agricolum* in close proximity to *siluestrem* (4.586) and his use of *siluas* and *siluestre* in close proximity to *agrestis* (5.1386 and 5.1411). Similar proximities are apparent in the Vergilian text.

135 Elder (1961) 117 proclaims (or, more accurately, exclaims) the programmatic nature of the opening of *Eclogue* 6: "Verses 1-12 are directly concerned, in personal terms, with the theory and practice of pastoral—out and out programmatic!" Van Sickle (2000) offers a thorough treatment of the programmatic nature of *Eclogue* 1.

When Tityrus declares in vv. 9-10, "He has permitted my cattle to roam, as you see, and myself / to play what I wish with my rustic reed" (*ille meas errare boues, ut cernis, et ipsum / ludere quae uellem calamo permisit agresti*), he describes his poetic-musical activity as play—as *ludus poeticus*, through and through.[136] But just as important as the use of this vocabulary of play to portray the nature of Tityrus' poetry is its location. When Vergil attributes these words to Tityrus at the beginning of the 1st *Eclogue*, he opens two play frames simultaneously: one that persists in the remainder of Tityrus' verses of *Eclogue* 1 and another that remains open for the duration of the collection, sometimes drawing attention to itself with pleasant, natural laughs (of place) in poems like *Eclogues* 3, 4, and 7, sometimes with bursts of laughter (of character) in portions of *Eclogues* 4 and 6, and at other times seeming to disappear when both laughter and play are altogether absent. This is because Tityrus' play in *Eclogue* 1 operates as a complement to another frame opened in the first five verses by Meliboeus, a frame that accounts for a different version of Vergilian pastoral and that makes use of different puzzle pieces. I believe Meliboeus' frame also stays open throughout the remainder of the collection and thus contributes to the oscillation of tone that becomes apparent even in a casual reading of the book of *Eclogues*. Whatever this tone is—I might volunteer "community" or "sympathy" or, even more abstractly, "responsibility"—it operates in tandem with "play" and "laughter."

Here I should explain and qualify my second assertion regarding how the Vergilian *ludus* of the *Eclogues* operates in conjunction with laughter. Although very little has been written about the role of "play" in in Latin literature since Wagenvoort's article, I note in Chapter 1 that a field of "play theory"—or "ludism"—has boomed in the past decades, drawing from such varied

136 Tityrus positions *ille* of v. 9 in a similar role to that of *Thalia* in *Ecl*. 6.2. By judging "him" a god, he establishes by default the Golden Age *coetus* of humans and immortals, and he also ascribes authority—the power to permit—to "him" in much the same way that Thalia has the superiority that allows her to deign to play: *dignata est ludere*.

fields as musicology, anthropology, psychology, and evolutionary-biology.[137] My arguments in the previous pages regarding a play frame in *Eclogues* 7, 6, and the *Eclogues* as a whole (along with those I propose in Chapter 2 and those that will appear briefly in Chapter 6) are not intended to be situated within this field. My study of play in the *Eclogues*, just like my study of laughter, remains intimately bound up with words, derivatives of *ludere*, in particular.

It remains nonetheless important to distinguish between the "vocabulary of laughter and the risible" and the "vocabulary of play." I do not, in my introduction, include *ludere* in the vocabulary of laughter and the risible for the simple reason that that not all play involves laughter. Laughter is not "visible" in ludic vocabulary in the same way that vestiges of *ridere* can be seen in terms like *ridiculus* and even *risus*. The semantic fields of play and laughter overlap at many points, but it is because they do not overlap at *all* points that I maintain a distinction between the two vocabularies.

Because of where laughter and play do overlap and coincide, particularly in Vergil's *Eclogues*, I have attended to play at length in the preceding pages. Silenus laughs in *Eclogue* 6 in the midst of a constellation of the vocabulary of play. "Everything laughs" in *Eclogue* 7 after seriousness has been dismissed and play embraced. But there is no laughter in *Eclogue* 1. And there is no play in *Eclogue* 4. A disclaimer regarding the concept of a play frame therefore seems necessary: the play frame, as I use it, does not take shape through a simple recurrence of vocabulary but through a persistence of tone. A profound difference between the vocabularies of laughter and play here becomes relevant, namely, that the vocabulary of laughter, insofar as I detect in it exceptional metacommunicative potential, is more effective in establishing a play frame than the vocabulary of play. I suspect that one can more easily read about play without feeling an invitation to play than one can read about laughter without feeling a provocation to

137 See Chapter 1, p. 82 n.28.

laugh. But if one reads of play and laughter together? That is a powerful combination, and it is one that features in Vergil's *Eclogues*, sometimes with the concurrence of terms for play and laughter, as in *Eclogues* 6 and 7, but other times, as in *Eclogue* 3, first with laughter alone and a subsequent tone of play.

A quantitative glance at the vocabulary of laughter and the risible in Vergil immediately suggests some interesting correspondences. One may be struck by the imbalance in the occasions of laughter throughout Vergil's three works. Of the nineteen instances of *rideo/risus* (and its prefixed versions *inrideo/inrisus* and *subrideo),* six occur in the *Eclogues,* one occurs in the *Georgics,* and the remaining twelve occur in the *Aeneid.* The numbers are more striking when one considers how many times laughter appears compared to the number of total verses in each poem: a word indicating laughter is used roughly once for every 140 lines of the *Eclogues,* once in all 2188 lines of the *Georgics,* and once for every 830 lines of the *Aeneid.* At a distance, there are not all that many occasions of laughter in the corpus, and Vergil, though undoubtedly sensitive to word choice and frequency, presumably was not keeping a concordance of his own poetry. This presumed unintentionality makes the preponderance of laughter in portions of Vergil's corpus—and the *Eclogues* in particular—most interesting.

The one occasion of laughter in the *Georgics* is the closest concurrence in the Vergilian corpus of the vocabulary of laughter and play. The terms appear together in v. 386 of Bk. 2 in an aetiology of dramatic poetic production in Italy.

non aliam ob culpam Baccho caper omnibus aris
caeditur et ueteres ineunt proscaenia ludi,
praemiaque ingeniis pagos et compita circum
Thesidae posuere, atque inter pocula laeti
mollibus in pratis unctos saluere per utres
nec non Ausonii, Troia gens missa, coloni
uersibus incomptis ludunt risuque soluto,
oraque corticibus sumunt horrenda cauatis,
et te, Bacche, uocant per carmina laeta, tibique

oscilla ex alta suspendunt mollia pinu.

Not for any other offense to Bacchus is the he-goat slaughtered
on all altars, and old entertainments enter upon the stage,
and around the counties and crossroads the descendents of Theseus
set prizes for skills, and happy amidst their cups
they danced on oiled skins in soft meadows,
and some Ausonian settlers, a clan sent from Troy,
play with unpolished verses and laughter unbound,
and they put on bristling faces hollowed from cork,
and you, Bacchus, they call in happy songs, and for you
soft masks hang from the high pine.

The broader context is a prescription for the preservation of new-grown vines: keep animals away. As the didactic poet states in the verses that immediately precede this passage (vv. 376-379), livestock does greater damage to vines than frost or drought. The particular guilt of the goat offers opportunity for a repackaging of Aristotle's aetiology of tragedy.

Yet if this were tragedy, there would be something peculiar in the play and unrestrained laughter of v. 387 (*ludunt risuque soluto*). The hitch seems to be the laughter. *Ludere* on its own might, in a pinch, be associated with theatrical mimesis of a tragic sort, but the collocation of laughter and *ludere* hardly conjures images of dithyrambic proto-tragedy. One could make a case from the setting and vocabulary (e.g., *mollibus in pratis* in v. 384) that a variation on bucolic is being described—perhaps one that includes dramatic performances of shepherding songs. The point is that were it not for the "laughter unbound" in v. 386, a reader might continue to think that the genre being referred to in these verses was a precursor to tragedy. The laughter establishes tone which, in turn, offers clues about genre: a Vergilian testament *in nuce* to the importance of laughter in considerations of genre.

Wagenvoort offers in a paragraph appearing in the middle of his article a list of the "kinds of poetry" to which the *ludus poeticus* can refer. The "kinds" are numbered, named, and amply supported with primary citations and quotations. The list, with citations and quotations excised,

reads as follows:

> The poems falling under this heading [of the *ludus poeticus*] are 1. light-hearted improvisations [. . .]; 2. iambic poems [. . .]; 3. fescennini [. . .]; 4. hendecasyllabics [. . .]; 5. erotic elegies [. . .]; 6. other erotic poems [. . .]; 7. lyrics in general [. . .]; 8. bucolics [. . .]; 9. epyllia [. . .]; 10. epigrams [. . .]; 11. satirae [. . .]; 12. minor epic poems [. . .].

The focus of the current chapter appears at "8," that of the previous chapter at "11," and that of the next chapter somewhere between "1" and "5." But the reason I quote this passage is to turn once more to the analogy for genre I have used throughout this study: the puzzle. Wagenvoort presents twelve different genres—twelve more-or-less distinct puzzles, but he asserts that one piece can be shared—perhaps even exchanged—among them. His piece is the *ludus poeticus*. I have proposed and explored laughing pieces that surround Horace's first book of *Satires* and, most recently, that appear in Vergil's *Eclogues*. An important fact to remember, however, is that despite the fact that these pieces can be used in varying combinations and, crucially, in multiple puzzles, laughter, like play, derives its power in relation to other topics, like seriousness and work—the "downs" to laughter's "ups." But what happens when even the downs are ups? In the next chapter, I explore what happens to genre when the laughing piece seems to appear everywhere in the puzzle.

CHAPTER 6: LAUGHTER IN LOVE

OVID'S *AMORES*

In my previous treatments of genre as a jigsaw puzzle, meter has featured as a persistent and pivotal piece, in large part because of the role that meter plays in ancient discussion of genre. When Aristotle asserts in *Poetics* 1447b13-17 that poets are typically identified by the meters in which they write, he illustrates his explanation with reference to two specific meters: elegy and epic. He suggests that the designation of poets as "elegy-makers" (ἐλεγειοποιός) or "epic-makers" (ἐποποιός) trumps a designation that might hinge upon the content of the poets' work. Meter lends its name and, by extension, an identity to the poet.

A metrical identity as a generic identity, however, does not map neatly onto a poem. Throughout my previous two chapters, I have examined the function of laughter in two books of poetry, the *Satires* and the *Eclogues*, whose authors would rightly be labeled "epic-makers" in Aristotle's metrical sense. Yet neither collection would be designated an epic by ancient or modern readers for a variety of reasons, one of which, I assert, is because of how laughter offers itself as a textual and tonal presence within these works. Horace's playful and laughter-laden *Satires* are more aptly grouped with other instantiations of Roman verse satire than with ancient epics. Likewise, the ten pastoral poems of Vergil's *Eclogues* differ markedly—in length, narrative structure, and tone—from the unified epic of Vergil's *Aeneid*. The disjoint reveals itself in the use of the term "epic" as both a metrical and generic designation. Though an instructor may rightly point out to his students that the *Satires* and *Eclogues* are written in an "epic meter," he will rarely introduce these works as epics.

One might expect elegy to function comparably, as Aristotle's juxtaposition of "elegy-

makers" and "epic-makers" in the *Poetics* implies that both meters, elegy and epic, have potent enough identities to determine how people identify the poets who use them. But "elegy" does not suffer from the same disjoint as epic as a designation of meter and genre. The label of "elegy" is shared comprehensively between the name of the meter, the name of the poets that use it (i.e., elegists), and the name of the poetry in which it is used—and this regardless of varying thematic content. "When we speak of an 'elegy', we usually think of a melancholy and meditative kind of poem. In ancient literature, however, an 'elegy' is defined only by its metre, by the alternating sequence of a dactylic hexameter and pentameter."[1] Thus elegy is both a metrical designation and a generic one.

The elegiac meter was utilized by an assortment of archaic Greek authors—Callinus, Archilochus, Tyrtaeus, Mimnermus, Solon—in compositions treating various themes, including warfare, politics, love, and death. The early history of the genre is muddled enough that a single *auctor* is unknown, as is the very origin of the Greek word ἔλεγος.[2] The passage in Horace's *Ars Poetica* in which the speaker offers an introductory analysis of elegy alongside epic, iambic, and lyric[3] portrays all four genres using a variety of generic attributes, but Horace's verses on elegy reflect both the variety of topics treated in the elegiac meter and the debated origins of the genre:

> *uersibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum,* 75
> *post etiam inclusa est uoti sententia compos;*
> *quis tamen exiguos elegos emiserit auctor,*
> *grammatici certant et adhuc sub iudice lis est.*
>
> In verses unequally paired laments were first enclosed, 75

1 Luck (1969) 19.

2 In a section entitled "A Brief History of Elegy," Volk (2010) 35-39 highlights the various topics treated in the elegiac couplet in Greek poetry before, turning to the Romans, she asserts, "Claiming elegy as an exclusively amatory genre was an original move that enabled the Roman elegists to construct a distinct type of poetry with its own rules and with great scope for self-referential reflections" (39). Luck (1969) 25-46 offers another particularly readable, although in his words "rapid" (42), survey of "The Origin of Elegy" in his chapter of the same name. Hunter (2013) urges that the symposium would be the ideal setting for what survives of early elegy. On the uncertain etymology of ἔλεγος, see Luck (1969) 27 and Brink (1971) 165.

3 I examine this passage in greater detail at the beginning of Chapter 4.

then, also, the sentiment of a discharged vow;
Still, as to who the founder was who put forth short elegies,
the grammarians dispute, and to this day the jury is out.

Along with "laments" (v. 75), the poet remarks that elegy is the metrical home to dedicatory epigrams (v. 76). A description of contentious grammarians (*grammatici certant* in v. 78) also may refer to Callimachus' agonistic claims in the opening of the *Aetia*,[4] thus drawing Hellenistic elegy into Horace's potted history of the genre.[5] In referencing two and perhaps three distinct variations of elegy, Horace effectively acknowledges the existence of subgenres. The content varies, but the meter and the generic label remain the same.

Noteworthy in Horace's description is the absence of any explicit mention of Roman amatory elegy, the subgenre with which this chapter occupies itself.[6] As noteworthy in the pages to follow (although, because I now draw attention to it, arguably less so) will be the absence of any thoroughgoing treatment of Greek elegy, or even of Catullan, Propertian, and Tibullan elegy. My focus falls on Ovid, the last of the Augustan elegists and, by some accounts, the end of the Roman elegiac tradition.[7] My reasons for focusing on Ovid are best offered as a simple assertion: his elegies laugh. The vocabulary of laughter and the risible appear as such a consistent feature of Ovidian love elegy, especially through his laughing playfulness with the conventions of the

4 See Cameron (1995) 185-232 for the argument that Callimachus is distinguishing his own elegiac undertaking from those of other elegists (rather than, as often interpreted, epic poets). Strabo 1.2.37 refers to Callimachus as γραμματικός. A post-Classical reference (via Athenaeus) to Callimachus as ὁ γραμματικός appears in Call. fr. 465 Pf.

5 Brink (1971) detects Callimachus elsewhere in the verses, stating that the adjective *exiguus* is "probably loaded, casting a slur on Callimachean pride in the small and highly wrought poem" (167).

6 Brink (1971) 165-166: "Considering the attention paid to love *lyric* a few verses below (85) and the popularity of love *elegy* at the time, the omission can scarcely be accidental [. . .]" (166). I wonder if *adhuc sub iudice lis est* could be a reference to how the Roman love elegists (Propertius and Ovid, in particular) present themselves as *auctores* of the genre through their personal encounters with an inspiring deity of elegy (Propertius 1.1.1-6 and Ovid in *Am*. 1.1.1-4). They do not admit (initially) to writing in a tradition but narrate that they began writing elegies independently, as if each poet independently created the genre.

7 Luck (1969) 181: "The great period of erotic elegy in Rome ends with Ovid's exile." See also Boyd (1997) 140-141, who notes that Ovid's narrative technique "makes the *Amores* something distinctively new in the Roman elegiac tradition." Volk (2010) asserts that Ovid "ended up changing the genre beyond recognition" (39). Ovid may be claiming this himself in *Am*. 3.15.2: "this last turning post is scraped by my elegies" (*raditur haec elegis ultima meta meis*).

genre, that he transforms elegy into a genre distinctly his own.[8] One need not look far in scholarship past or present to find a reference to Ovid as, for example, "the gayest and most playful of Latin writers"[9] or for an evaluation of his "unique place among the elegiac poets."[10] Few treatments of the poet or his work will forgo some reference to his humor or genius.[11] When taken collectively, these comments, whether about Ovid's disposition as a writer or the tone of his poetry, become declarations of his generic singularity. The tone ceases to be just one among many features and becomes instead a defining feature. Rather than direct the following discussion to a consideration of Ovid's reception, however, I argue that Ovid offers laughter as a textual indicator of generic playfulness and, consequently, of generic redefinition.[12]

In his jigsaw puzzle of love elegy that begins with the *Amores*, Ovid collects all of the pieces from the compositions of his predecessors, elegiac and otherwise, and then proceeds to construct a new puzzle through persistent and playful alteration. Moreover, he calls attention to these alterations as he performs them. And as he continues to trim tabs on various pieces and to introduce patterns familiar from other genres only to remove them shortly thereafter, he fashions a handful of duplicate pieces that resemble one another in shape and size. He places these pieces at the corners and edges of his puzzle, redefining and anchoring its boundaries. These pieces are laughter.

Laughing and Playing at the Boundaries of Genre

When one takes the metrical puzzle piece from Homer's *Iliad* and plunks this "hexameter

8 Miller (2013) 252 remarks that in the *Fasti* Ovid "asserts his poetic identity by strongly evoking the heritage of Latin love elegy even as he is broadening the elegiac genre." I would substitute "redefining" for "broadening."

9 Glover (1934) 533 (cited by Luck (1969) 166) refers to Ovid as "the gayest and most playful of Latin writers."

10 Katz (2009) 163.

11 Quintilian *nimium amator ingenii sui* and Luck (1969) 180: "To read the *Amores* provides the privilege of accompanying their author and protagonist on an infinitely entertaining pilgrimage of pleasure and good-natured self-deception."

12 Boyd (1997) 164: "In the *Amores*, he offers us a new type of elegy, in which love is not an end but a means. This relationship between style and substance is itself a legacy of Callimachus; but in claiming it for himself, Ovid personalizes it, giving the narrator his own name.

piece" down in a puzzle that contains far less war and more lighthearted narrator participation than Homer, a tension arises. Expectations are frustrated. When one draws attention to this metrical incongruity and treats it as something of a motif, the tension is reinforced.[13] Likewise, after new expectations are set regarding the content of elegy, tension between meter and content results on those occasions when Ovid invites warfare and its effects into his elegiac narrative. Although thematic material revolving around war would not have been atypical in the archaic Greek elegy of Tyrtaeus or Archilochus, Ovid's Roman precursors typically define themselves and their poetry in opposition to a life of military service,[14] and Ovid himself refers to his elegies as *imbelles*.[15] One can imagine the tension created at the boundaries between physical puzzle pieces when those pieces are not usually juxtaposed—not "meant to fit together." I imagine an impatient but determined puzzler mashing a tab into the wrong blank, crinkling the cardboard in the process, and leaving a sliver of space as testament that the pieces did not belong together in the first place.

But tension, when relieved, can provoke laughter, whether that laughter is motivated by incongruity, a sense of release, or even a sense of superiority when atypical pieces finally slide into place. And because readers come to recognize the content of a work by assembling all of the individual words that constitute its meaning, then words and terms for laughter are the equivalent so many pieces in the puzzle of genre.

Although the dating of the original publication of Ovid's *Amores* remains uncertain, as

13 For example, Boyd (1997) 141 detects "programmatic material" throughout the collection and argues that it is necessary to an interpretation of the *Amores* rather than extraneous.

14 Murgatroyd (1975) draws upon isolated references in Greek poetry to love and war to argue that the elegiac opposition of *militia amoris* to authentic warfare developed originally from "an application of military language to amatory activities, suggested by their resemblance to military operations" (60). He also notes that Tibullus and Propertius, by demonstrating a greater opposition to war (76-77), "invested [*militia amoris*] with a degree of seriousness and gravity which it had not so far possessed" (77). However, I accept Gale's (1997) final caution that, "the very overt 'literariness' of elegy opens up levels of irony which make it impossible (or at least inadequate) to regard the poet as offering us a straightforward ideological programme or political message" (91).

15 *Am.* 3.15.14.

does the length of the gap between first publication and republication of the collection in its five-book and three-book versions,[16] the *Amores* are generally accepted as having been Ovid's earliest composition—his "debut."[17] As such, this collection of elegiac poems presents a first boundary in the introduction of a new Augustan poet. Furthermore, *Amores* 1.1, by nature of its being the first in the collection, offers an even more finely delineated boundary.[18] I examine other occasions of laughter that occur in the three books of Ovid's collection, but I focus on *Amores* 1.1, reading the poem sequentially, both to demonstrate how the meaning is gradually constructed and to stress how Ovid's repeated association of laughter, love, and elegy in the *Amores* reflects a playful generic self-consciousness and creates a distinctly Ovidian take on elegy.

The first elegy in Ovid's *Amores* foregrounds an acute sensitivity to the relationship between meter, content, and genre:

> *arma graui numero uiolentaque bella parabam*
> *edere, materia conueniente modis.*
> *par erat inferior uersus—risisse Cupido*
> *dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.*
>
> Weapons in a weighty rhythm and violent wars I was preparing
> to put forth, with the material suiting the meter.
> The second verse was equal to the first—Cupid is said
> to have laughed and to have snatched away one foot.

Ovid draws explicit attention to meter in the phrase "in a weighty rhythm" (*graui numero*)[19] and to the intersection of metrical form and a poem's subject in v. 2: "with the material suiting the meter" (*materia conveniente modis*). Like Horace, Ovid in the opening of the *Amores* seems to

16 For the problems of dating the *Amores*, see Syme (1978) 1-8 and McKeown (1987) 74-89. A summary of the (inconclusive) discussion of the two editions appears with bibliography in Boyd (1997) 143 n. 27. Boyd suggests that the first edition may never have existed (146), a position with which I am sympathetic.

17 Conte (1994b) 343.

18 The finest boundary would be the four-verse epigram with which Ovid introduces the *Amores*, but I treat this later in the chapter.

19 For weight in meter (*gravis*), cf. Aristotle's use of ὀγκώδης at *Poetics* 1459b31-1460: "[T]he heroic meter is the most stately and weighty of the meters" (τὸ γὰρ ἡρωικὸν στασιμώτατον καὶ ὀγκωδέστατον τῶν μέτρων ἐστίν).

subscribe to the belief that specific content is best conveyed in specific meters.[20] Horace suggests in *Ars Poetica* v. 73 to what genre and in what meter the discussion of "sorrowful wars" (*tristia bella*) belongs, and, indeed, Ovid not only writes wars into his first verse of dactylic hexameter but weapons too, beginning his poem with the same word that Vergil uses at the beginning of the *Aeneid—arma*.[21] These are the first puzzle pieces the poet places before his reader, and offered as they are in a rapid line of hexameter, Ovid offers his readers ample reason to believe he is embarking upon a work of epic. It appears that everything was moving along smoothly enough until the poet heard laughter.

Cupid's reported laughter in the third verse announces itself with a mischievous, snickering sibilance—*risisse*.[22] The laugh seems to jar the speaker out of his expectations of composing poetry about war and weaponry, and the poet preserves some of this surprise for his readers by placing the laughing infinitive first in its clause, immediately after the strong caesura and before its source and governing verb (*dicitur*) are known. The speaker's poetic revery is broken not by the sight of the boy Cupid but by the laughing sound he is said to have made.

"Is said to have made" is a curious formulation, but it is Ovid's own, and I return to it shortly. In any case, the speaker's epistemological relationship to Cupid's actions remains ambiguous at this point in the poem. It is not clear in the first four verses that he even *sees* the boy. Instead, Cupid's laughter and thievery are reduced to "hearsay"—*dicitur* in v. 4, as if Ovid only found out that Cupid was responsible for the theft some time later. The speaker's subsequent address to Cupid, beginning in v. 5 and continuing for 16 verses, does little to clarify matters:

20 In *Remedia Amoris* vv. 371-398, Ovid makes the connection between content and meter most plain (e.g., *fortia Maeonio gaudent pede bella referri*, v. 373).

21 McKeown (1987) 106 remarks upon the convention of using opening words to refer to a literary work and proceeds to note on p. 107 n. 11 that "the *Amores* were sometimes actually referred to as the *Arma* during the Middle Ages."

22 The sibilance begins to voice itself with the previous word *uersus*, but there is otherwise a dearth of S's in the first two verses.

"Who, cruel boy, gave you this degree of authority over songs?" ("*quis tibi, saeue puer, dedit hoc in carmina iuris?*"). The speaker's direct speech to the boy could establish the fact that the two figures are inhabiting the same space, but the skepticism created through the word *dicitur* could offer readers reason to believe that the poet is cursing Cupid in his absence. In either case, Ovid scolds Cupid aloud and proceeds to illustrate a topsy-turvy world that would result if gods were to abandon their traditional responsibilities. In vv. 17-20, Ovid arrives at the real source of his concern: his own poetry.

> *cum bene surrexit uersu nova pagina primo,*
> *attenuat nervos proximus ille meos;*
> *nec mihi materia est numeris leuioribus apta,*
> *aut puer aut longas compta puella comas.'* 20
>
> "When a new page has started well with the initial verse,
> that next one diminishes my powers.
> Nor do I have material that accommodates lighter meters,
> neither a boy nor a girl adorned with long hair." 20

As in his opening verses, content, meter, and by extension, genre occupy his attention. He even buries a sly allusion to the proper content of hexameter when he hides the word *rex* in plain sight in v. 17: *sur**rex**it.*[23] In something of an unprecedented move, Ovid claims to have been *successfully* engaged in the writing of an epic. This is not a *recusatio* in which a poet appeals to his inability to write in a "higher" genre so as to excuse his more humble pursuits.[24] Quite the contrary, Ovid's problem is not a lack of ability or content but, he stresses, meter: the shorter line of the pentameter is simply too weak for the weighty material he wishes to address. Nor do the problems stop there. Should the poet attempt to compose in elegiac couplets, his issue becomes one of content: he lacks a beloved to inspire his "lighter meters."

23 Cf. Horace *A.P.* 73: *res gestae **regumque** ducumque et tristia bella.*

24 McKeown (1989) notes, "It was conventional that a poet should attempt to justify his adherence to a humble genre by declaring that he lacked the ability to aspire to another which was superior and preferable," and cites Vergil's *Ecl.* 6.3ff as evidence (among others). Conte (1994a) refers to the *recusatio* as "the most characteristic, most constant element of Augustan poetry" (123), and goes on to state that "the *recusationes* are better explained as a spectacle of literary genres and of the related genres of life" (123-124).

A reader can imagine, when reading the poem sequentially up to this point, that Ovid was not actually addressing an embodied Cupid but ranting at the idea of Love. He was shaking his fist in the air because he was suffering from a strange case of writer's block—a tic that only permitted him to write in a specific meter. But the poem makes a rapid turn toward the surreal. It turns out that Cupid was physically present to react and respond to the speaker's rant. Ovid narrates in vv. 21-24 that after he finished his complaint, the boy opened his quiver, grabbed an arrow, curved his bow, and said, "What sort of work you'll sing—take it!" It seems most reasonable in hindsight that the speaker and the boy were inhabiting the same physical space all along, and at least since that moment in the inset narrative when the speaker's addresses Cupid in v. 5.

With this in mind, the use of *dicitur* in v. 4 becomes all the more puzzling. McKeown is content to regard the *dicitur* as "problematic."[25] One possible explanation is that Cupid only appears in response to the poet's rant. This would mean that the poet is genuinely unsure about what happened to his epic endeavors. Someone tells him it was that rascal Cupid, and he shouts at Cupid, who then shows up. But this reading raises two big questions. Where was Ovid when the theft occurred, and who tattled on Cupid?

Moles (1991) offers an alternative reading of *dicitur* in presenting his case for "The Dramatic Coherence of Ovid *Amores* 1.1 and 1.2":

> 'It is said', 'they say', 'there is a story' etc. are often used as 'distancing' formulae whereby the writer does not commit himself to the veracity of certain material, particularly when it is of a supernatural character. He thus avoids violation of the canons of realism or the charge of personal naïveté. (The technique is of course particularly common in, though not restricted to, historiography.)
>
> Here we may regard Ovid as either using such a formula directly or knowingly alluding to it in, as it were, inverted commas: 'Cupid "is said" to have laughed.' In either case Ovid's application to what purports to be his own experience of a formula normally

25 McKeown (1989) 14: "It cannot be an appeal to literary authority [. . .], because the experience here is personal."

> applied to material from which the writer distances himself creates an effect at once impudent, humorous, paradoxical, ironic and spuriously rationalist.[26]

That Ovid rigorously subscribes to a compulsion to preserve any "canons of realism" is particularly unlikely in light of later poems in the collection (e.g., the aural epiphany of Cupid and Venus in 1.6.11-12). Moreover, a poem from considerably later in his elegiac career reveals the poet capable of signaling clearly when a potentially unrealistic interaction is experienced in the course of a dream-state.[27] In any case, the latter half of Moles' explanation with its emphasis on impudence, humor, and irony seems closer to the mark.

I believe that Ovid introduces a new variation on the "Alexandrian footnote" with his use of *dicitur.* [28] An Alexandrian footnote distinguishes itself for the fact that it marks the passage in the text without explicitly identifying the source text. At its least forgiving, the footnote presents readers with the equivalent of a little super-script number in a word like *dicitur*, but when the reader looks to the bottom of the page, she finds nothing. Slightly more forgiving is when the footnote reminds the reader that the text before her is in literal dialogue with other texts and possibly presenting a variant tradition. The hope and expectation on the part of the footnoter are presumably that the readership catches the references or notices the deviation, in which case the footnote functions as a knowing nod, if also a challenge, saying, "If you are well-read, you will know where this is from."

A simple illustration of an Alexandrian footnote appears in the opening lines of *Aeneid* 6 wherein the poet begins his description of the doors to the Temple of Apollo at Cumae:

---

26 Moles (1991) 553.

27 See *Ex Ponto* 3.3.65-66 and, most explicitly, v. 7: *publica me requies curarum somnus habebat / fusaque erant toto languida membra toro* [. . .]. The poet's revisitation of an encounter with Cupid in this poem occurs on his bed and mirrors one of his earliest encounters with love in *Amores* 1.2.

28 Ross (1975) 78 coins the term but directs readers (in his own n. 2) to Norden (1926) on *Aeneis VI*, 123-124, who glosses such phrases as "das Zeichen der *diffidentia des Dichters*" (123) before offering a footnote of his own. See also Nisbet-Hubbard (1970) on 1.7.23 and Hinds (1987) 8-9. For a variation on the concept of "footnoting" that hinges upon the vocabulary of memory, see Miller (1993).

Daedalus, ut fama est, fugiens Minoia regna
praepetibus pennis ausus se credere caelo [. . .] 15

Daedalus, as the story goes, fleeing Minoan kingdoms
and having dared on fleet wings to entrust himself to the sky [. . .] 15

Servius originally supposed that *ut fama est* was Vergil's attempt to communicate to the reader that he was about to say something fantastic, not unlike the first explanation of *dicitur* espoused by Moles, but the footnote ultimately reveals Vergil to be letting readers know that he is presenting a traditional tale with allusive echoes of Catullus 64.[29]

A more challenging footnote signposting a variant tradition appears in Book 2 vv. 567-568 of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*:

a, quotiens lasciva pedes risisse mariti
dicitur, et duras igne vel arte manus.

Ah, how often the wanton one is said to have laughed at
the feet of her husband and his hands rough from fire or craft.

The similarities to Cupid's laughter in *Amores* 1.1.3 are immediately apparent, but the footnote makes considerably more sense in light of the fact that just six verses earlier in vv. 561-562, the *praeceptor amoris* relays the status of the upcoming story as a "very well-known tale":

fabula narratur toto notissima caelo,
Mulciberis capti Marsque Venusque dolis.

The very well-known tale is told throughout the heavens,
Mars and Venus both captures by the tricks of Mulciber.

The story is indeed very well known to readers of *Odyssey* Book 8 wherein the bard Demodocus sings of Ares' and Aphrodite's adulterous liaison. When Hephaestus catches the lovers *in flagrante* and exposes their relations to the other gods, the gods greet the spectacle with unquenchable laughter (8.326-7) and shortly thereafter laugh again at the smart-alecky remarks

29 Austin (1986) on verse 14 of Book 6. The allusion is particularly evident in Vergil's variation on Catullus' use of *inobservabilis error* in c. 64.115 with his own *inextricabilis error* in the same metrical *sedes* of *Aen*. 6.27. Both hexasyllabic terms are new coinages.

of Hermes (8.342):

> ἄσβεστος δ' ἄρ' ἐνῶρτο γέλως μακάρεσσι θεοῖσι
> τέχνας εἰσορόωσι πολύφρονος Ἡφαίστοιο.
> ὧδε δέ τις εἴπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον·
> "οὐκ ἀρετᾷ κακὰ ἔργα· κιχάνει τοι βραδὺς ὠκύν,
> ὡς καὶ νῦν Ἥφαιστος ἐὼν βραδὺς εἷλεν Ἄρηα, 8.330
> ὠκύτατόν περ ἐόντα θεῶν, οἳ Ὄλυμπον ἔχουσι,
> χωλὸς ἐών, τέχνῃσι· τὸ καὶ μοιχάγρι' ὀφέλλει."
> ὣς οἱ μὲν τοιαῦτα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀγόρευον·
> Ἑρμῆν δὲ προσέειπεν ἄναξ Διὸς υἱὸς Ἀπόλλων·
> "Ἑρμεία Διὸς υἱέ, διάκτορε, δῶτορ ἑάων, 8.335
> ἦ ῥά κεν ἐν δεσμοῖσ' ἐθέλοις κρατεροῖσι πιεσθεὶς
> εὕδειν ἐν λέκτροισι παρὰ χρυσῇ Ἀφροδίτῃ;"
> τὸν δ' ἠμείβετ' ἔπειτα διάκτορος Ἀργεϊφόντης·
> "αἴ γὰρ τοῦτο γένοιτο, ἄναξ ἑκατηβόλ' Ἄπολλον.
> δεσμοὶ μὲν τρὶς τόσσοι ἀπείρονες ἀμφὶς ἔχοιεν, 8.340
> ὑμεῖς δ' εἰσορόῳτε θεοὶ πᾶσαί τε θέαιναι,
> αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν εὕδοιμι παρὰ χρυσῇ Ἀφροδίτῃ."
> ὣς ἔφατ', ἐν δὲ γέλως ὦρτ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν.

> [A]nd unquenchable laughter arose among the blessed gods
> as they saw the works of ingenious Hephaestus.
> And thus someone looking on said to another nearby:
> 'Cheater's never prosper. Look. The slow overtakes the swift,
> as even now Hephaestus, being slow, captures Ares, 8.330
> the swiftest of the gods who inhabit Olympus
> by his works, although lame; the adulterer's fine is owed.'
> In this way the gods said such things to one another.
> But lord Apollo son of Zeus addressed Hermes:
> 'Hermes, son of Zeus, messenger and giver of good things, 8.335
> would you be willing, weighed down among strong bindings,
> to sleep in bed alongside golden Aphrodite?'
> To him, then, the messenger and slayer of Argus replied:
> 'If only this could happen, lord Apollo, far-darting one.
> Let three times as many inescapable bindings encircle me, 8.340
> and all you gods and goddesses look on,
> but I would sleep alongside golden Aphrodite.'
> Thus he spoke, and laughter arose among the undying gods.

The subsequent narrative identifies Poseidon as the only god who does not laugh in v. 343. Instead, he vouches for Ares and arranges for the release of the shamed adulterers.

Let us return now to the laughter attributed to Venus in the *Ars Amatoria*, who, in her earlier incarnations as Aphrodite in the Odyssean Song of Demodocus, did not laugh at all.

Venus' laughter, conveyed by the same *risisse* that Cupid is said to have offered, is distinctly derisive as she impersonates her blue-collar and hobbled husband. Perhaps she even limps around as Hephaestus does in *Iliad* 1 in an attempt to make her divine audience—her lover Mars—laugh along with her.[30] One might argue that any telling of this *fabula notissima* must include laughter because of the central role that laughter plays in Homer's version, and an occasion of laughter closely resembling that prompted by Hermes' comment in Book 8 appears near the end of Ovid's account. Whether because the laughter of Venus, failing as it does to appear in any comparable manner in *Odyssey* 8, appears in a since-lost source to which the poet was drawing attention, or because an ingenious way to validate a new addition within a narrative is by suggesting that it is not in fact new, the *praeceptor amoris* footnotes his deviation from the Homeric account with *dicitur*.

An Alexandrian footnote can be introduced by any number of words, but those that appear most frequently in Augustan poetry are verbs of speech that are typically third-person plural or impersonal, such as *dicunt*, *ferunt*, *dicitur* (as we have in *Amores* 1.1.4), or *ut fama est*. They say, it is said, as the story goes. Some of these are familiar to English speakers as the way "words of wisdom" are passed down: "They say that a bird in hand is worth two in a bush." But if someone said, "They say that to be or not to be, that is the question," a listener might be tempted to respond, "Well no, *they* don't really say that, unless by *they* you mean Shakespeare *and* Hamlet." But if someone *did* say that, you might suppose that person was having a good time and being, in a word, playful. Ovid offers an even more extreme example in his opening to *Amores* 1.1. He impersonalizes a personal story. It is as if a professor were to walk into a room and say, "I was preparing this lecture, and things were coming along superbly, but then *they say*

30 The narrator draws explicit attention to Vulcan's feet (*pedes* in 2.567) at the object of Venus' laughter. If she were to impersonate him and limp, as *Elegy* herself is said to in *Am*. 3.1.7-10, a reader might recall the reference to uneven lines of elegy and Cupid's theft of a foot in *Am*. 1.1.3-4.

that my baby tore up some pages." Students' first and second questions would likely be, "Who are they? And where were you?"

Ovid parodies the idea of the Alexandrian footnote by creating, in essence, a "dangling footnote." He refers to a tradition that does not actually exist and offers a "nonsense" footnote that says no more than, "This is a footnote," and he thus disrupts readers' expectations. A potential response to this disruption is presented in the very same clause: laughter. As he self-consciously writes about the boundaries of genre and sets himself apart from epic as if compelled to do so, he writes a laugh in the narrative fabric itself. The incongruity of *dicitur* is jarring, a little disorienting, but ultimately a type of poetic play—a relief made possible by the idea that Ovid is shifting from a weightier (*grauis*) genre to a lighter (*leuior*) one.

Ovid eventually draws the poem to a close:

sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat:
ferrea cum uestris bella ualete modis.
cingere litorea flauentia tempora myrto,
Musa, per undenos emodulanda pedes. 30

May the work rise for me with six beats, may it settle in five;
unyielding war with your meter, farewell.
You, wreath your golden temples with shore-born myrtle,
you, Muse who must be celebrated through eleven feet. 30

If one steps back to examine the boundaries of this boundary poem—its beginning and end, Ovid's fixation upon meter cannot go unrecognized. He frames the poem with references to his transition from heroic to elegiac verse, and a relentless poetic self-consciousness operates throughout the intervening verses. The poem is unabashedly about poetry and about poetic *qua* metrical genre in particular.[31]

Yet isolated occasions of "self-consciousness" do not seem sufficient for sustaining a tone of playfulness. Vergil's beginning to the *Aeneid* is also poetry about poetry: *arma uirumque cano*

31 Boyd (1997) Chapter 4 stresses this.

—“I sing of arms and a man.” Scholars have long noted how Vergil compresses the themes of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into the first two words of his new epic—the war of the *Iliad*, the individual man of the *Odyssey,*[32] and the poet places himself in the poem too—“*I* sing.” The agonistic edge contains elements of playfulness,[33] but the poem quickly shifts away from this marked poetic self-consciousness. The narrator of the *Aeneid* fades into the background only to emerge sporadically in the remainder of the epic. The weightier nature of the *Aeneid's* competitive play becomes more apparent when set against the beginning of another Vergilian poem, *Eclogues* 6:

> *prima Syracosio dignata est ludere uersu*
> *nostra, neque erubuit siluas habitare, Thalia.*
> *cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthius aurem*
> *uellit, et admonuit: "pastorem, Tityre, pinguis*
> *pascere oportet ouis, deductum dicere carmen."*
> *nunc ego (namque super tibi erunt, qui dicere laudes,*
> *Vare, tuas cupiant, et tristia condere bella)*
> *agrestem tenui meditabor harundine Musam.*
>
> First in a Syracusan verse she deigned to play,
> our Thalia, nor did she blush to inhabit the woods.
> When I was singing of kings and battles, Cynthius plucked
> my ear and urged: “The shepherd, Tityrus, ought
> to pasture plump sheep, to sing a fine-spun song.”
> Now I (for there will be plenty men for you, Varus, who desire
> to speak your praises and to compose sad wars)
> will ponder the rustic Muse with a slender reed.

Eclogue 6 narrates another boundary of genre. It contains another *recusatio*, another occasion of generic self-awareness, of not singing the *tristia bella* that Horace later regards as the domain of epic. Appearing in the first verse is the key word: *ludere*—to play.[34] This is quite literally “play” at the boundary of genre. And the explanation for how this play marks itself as more lighthearted than the play of the *Aeneid* is provided by the other verb in the first verse of the poem: *dignata*

32 Barchiesi (1997), for example.
33 Considerations of the poetic ἀγών and its potential ties to laughter are explored in Chapter 2; see also Huizinga (1955) 105-118.
34 See the discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 275-288.

est. She deigned. As discussed above,[35] Vergil uses the same word at the end of *Eclogue* 4 for a god who is willing to associate with humans. So Thalia in a sense "tolerated" the shift in genre. She *condescended*. The language of descent narrates a descent in genre.[36]

With this in mind, we can return to *Amores* 1.1. I assert above that an important feature of the tonal effect of Ovid's generic play is that the poet narrates a shift from weighty to lighter poetry: *grauis* in v. 1 to *leuior* in v. 19. Heavy epic disappears. Lighter elegy prevails. Familiar to anyone who has been unburdened of a physical weight, release of tension and a sense of relief follow a shift from heavy to light, dark to bright, and difficult to easy much more readily than shifts in the opposite direction.[37] Noteworthy of the laughter in v. 3 is its simultaneous status as both cause of the tension and effect of the tension's release. *Risisse* establishes some degree of the tonal tension between themes by voicing the shift to levity after the martial terminology in v. 1 and thus creating incongruity, but the laughter also presents itself as a fitting response to this incongruity, diffusing the tension it creates and establishing a sense of levity.

I pick the word "levity" deliberately. The *risisse* of v. 3 is not the first occasion of levity announced in the corpus of Ovid's *Amores*, nor, for that matter, is the word *leuior* in v. 19. Before Cupid laughs his way into *Amores* 1.1 and snatches away a foot of the speaker's nascent epic and before the speaker's work even begins with the *arma* of the first word, Ovid announces the levity of his three-book collection of elegiac works with an epigram that has proved the source of seemingly-unresolvable scholarly speculation:

> *qui modo Nasonis fueramus quinque libelli,*
> *tres sumus; hoc illi praetulit auctor opus.*
> *ut iam nulla tibi nos sit legisse uoluptas,*
> *at leuior demptis poena duobus erit.*

35 Chapter 5, pp. 265-266.

36 Volk (2010) 40: "[T]o the Roman poets of the 1st century BCE, the *Aetia* prologue became a blueprint for their own rejection of "high" genres such as epic, tragedy, and political panegyric and election instead of "low" types of poetry such as bucolic and elegy."

37 For a description of the relief theory of laughter, see the Introduction, pp. 31-32.

We who had formerly been the five books of Naso
  are three; the author preferred this work to that.
Though even now you may receive no pleasure from reading us,
  at least the punishment will be lighter with two books removed.

The epigram suggests to readers that the *Amores* were published in two editions, but decades of speculation about the composition and dating of these suggested editions has yet to yield any degree of certainty on either topic.[38] Setting aside questions of the composition, dating, and perhaps the very existence of two separate editions, one can see how these verses may serve a programmatic function in Ovid's text:

> [T]he trimming of the *Amores* implied by the epigram is in fact intended to have a distinctly Callimachean character to it, as it recalls by example the precept handed down to us by a number of Callimachean testimonia, μέγα βιβλίον μέγα κακόν (Call. fr. 465 Pf.); the collection tells us that it is made better insofar as it has been made smaller.[39]

Boyd goes on to draw attention to the "playful contradiction" at work in Ovid's use of the word *auctor* which, via *augeo*, appears to be at odds with Callimachean principles of compression evident elsewhere in the epigram, i.e., in the claimed process of editing by trimming and the Catullan refinement and polish implied in the diminutive *libelli*.

The term *leuior* in v. 4 of the epigram garners no comment from Boyd, but Ovid's use of the same word in his description of the elegiac meter in v. 19 of *Amores* 1.1 marks *leuis* as programmatically significant.[40] A clear thematic parallel also extends between the four-verse epigram and the thirty-verse poem that it precedes: each poem refers to the previous existence of a grander work—a collection in five books or an epic poem in six beats—that, through removal of elements, has assumed a smaller and "lighter" form. Hence, *leuis* functions an apt descriptor

38 See Cameron (1968) for a summary of many influential arguments about the two editions, including a bibliography (referring to other bibliographies) on p. 320 n. 1. What Cameron and most other scholars take for granted (with the previously noted exception of Boyd (1997), for which see n. 13, above) is the existence of two editions.

39 Boyd (1997) 145.

40 "[. . .] *nec mihi materia est numeris levioribus apta*—"[. . .] Nor do I have material that accommodates lighter meters."

of the result from a transition from five to three books as well as from the shift in epic to elegiac meters. Conspicuously absent from Ovid's introductory epigram, however, are what some scholars regard as the programmatic adjectives characteristic of love elegy: *tenuis* and *mollis*. Although these terms and their etymological cousins (e.g., *at**tenu**at* in *Am*. 1.1.18 and *mollia . . . uerba* in *Am*. 1.12.22) appear with generic significance elsewhere in the collection, they do not feature in the Ovidian books' epigrammatic self-presentation. Arguments have long existed for the equivalence of *tenuis* with an aesthetic encompassing Hellenistic ideals more broadly (and beyond elegy), namely, λεπτότης,[41] but Ovid strikes out in a different direction than his predecessors, hexametric and elegiac alike:

> Love-elegy before Ovid was fundamentally paradoxical. The genre was conventionally regarded, even by its exponents themselves, as being light and lacking in seriousness, but the elegists nevertheless write about their love-affairs in an essentially serious manner. [. . .] The originality of the *Amores* lies largely with Ovid's resolution of this paradox: he handles the light genre with unrelenting lightness. The emotional intensity which characterises the great majority of the elegies of Tibullus and Propertius is entirely absent from the *Amores*, being replaced by a robust and cheerfully detached attitude to the sufferings which love inflicts.[42]

Ovid's verses in the epigram and in *Amores* 1.1 identify the poems not simply as *leuis*, an adjective in the positive degree used frequently by Propertius and Tibullus, but as *leuior*, with the comparative announcing Ovid's perpetual awareness of—and desire to distinguish himself from

41 Keith (1994) focuses on *tenuis* (27-30) and *mollis* (34-35) as representative terms for elegy and places them against *durus* as an adjective representative of hexametric poetry. She neglects to mention *leuis* as an elegiacally-loaded term that appears frequently throughout the Propertian and Tibullan *corpora*. We have previously seen the use of these adjectives in (descriptions of) hexametric poetry, such as Horace's *Satires* 1.10.44 when the satirist describes Vergil's poetic compositions, or throughout Vergil's *Eclogues*, for which see Rumpf (2009). Clausen (1964) 194 equates *tenuis* with λεπτός: "In the first Eclogue the adjective *tenui* is ornamental, necessary rather to the balance of the verse than to its sense—*siluestrem tenui musam meditaris auena*; the involved word order is suggestive of Hellenistic elegance. But in the sixth Eclogue *tenui* is more than ornamental—*agrestem tenui meditabor harundine musam*; it implies a concept of style; it is the Latin equivalent of λεπτός or λεπταλέος: μοῦσαν . . . λεπταλέην, λεπταί / ῥήσιες. His pastoral poetry, Virgil thus obliquely asserts, is Callimachean in character. Failure to recognize this has impaired the quality of much that has been written about the *Eclogues*." For a counterargument against the privileging of λεπτότης as a Hellenistic ideal, see Porter (2011).

42 McKeown (1987) 13-14.

—his forebears. And should the Greek term or its cognates[43] have been on Ovid's mind, *leuis* and *leuior* have the added advantage over *tenuis* and *mollis* of drawing upon an alliterative connection to λεπτότης. In any case, through his use of *leuior* Ovid declares his espousal of *greater* levity.[44] His poetry manages to be lighter than its former self (by two books!) before the reader has even worked through the two distichs of the epigram, just as his elegies are identified as being lighter than epic by the end of *Amores* 1.1. And this increased buoyancy of tone is accompanied, fittingly, by laughter.

But it must be recognized that Ovid merely hints at pleasure (*uoluptas*) and levity (*leuior*) in the 3rd and 4th verses of the epigram before juxtaposing these themes with the vocabulary of punishment (*poena* in v. 4 of the epigram), weapons, weightiness, and war (*arma*, *graui*, and *bella* in *Am*. 1.1.1). Just as readers begin to set their expectations in the opening verses of *Amores* 1.1, laughter erupts and the thematic tension resolves back in the direction of levity. sustained throughout the poem. Setting out from the first occasion of tension and its laughing resolution in the opening couplets of *Amores* 1.1, Ovid's poetic self-consciousness bombards readers with other reasons to laugh in the remainder of his first poem. The inversion of the divine order in vv. 7-16 illustrates incongruity on a cosmic scale, and that the poet casts his metrical difficulties as quite literally the end of the world is an expansion of this incongruity.

I suggest that the tonal shift begins with the laughter of v. 3, nor can one underestimate this laughter's metacommunicative impact on the tone of the work as a whole. The effect of the laughter in v. 3 on the remainder of *Amores* 1.1 becomes quickly apparent as the frame of play opened in v. 3 is reinforced in the immediate context and sustained throughout the remainder of the poem by unflagging poetic self-consciousness and by potential provocations to laughter via

43 λεπτός or λεπταλέος.

44 *OLD* s.v. levis, n. 14 offers the definition "Intended for amusement, not serious, light," and represents this use with references to poetic production.

illustrations of incongruity. The metacommunicative effect of the laughter, levity, and playfulness in *Amores* 1.1 on the remainder of the collection likewise becomes apparent through a cataloguing of the sources, location, and frequency of laughter throughout the remaining *Amores*. Just as laughter at the beginning of a single poem can lend a particular tone to the remainder of that poem, the placing of a laugh at the beginning of a multivolume poetic project stands to amplify this effect, especially if its reinforced throughout.[45] The laughter in Ovid's *Amores* 1.1 becomes programmatic—a defining attribute of the generic puzzle he is assembling before his readership.

LOOK WHO'S LAUGHING

There is a paucity of laughter in what are considered the programmatic poems of Propertian and Tibullan elegy,[46] but Ovid reinforces the idea that laughter functions programmatically in his poetry in his portrayal of particular "laughers" at marked places in the *Amores*, both in the physical book and in the context of the narrative. In this way, the metacommunicative power of laughter is reinforced periodically, and almost always where genre is under discussion.

While I have placed a great deal of emphasis on the location and epistemological uncertainty (via hearsay) of the laughter in *Amores* 1.1, I have yet to stress its source. Cupid is said to laugh at the beginning of Ovid's first book. He is the offspring of Venus, the goddess of love's lovechild, a divine embodiment of youthful love. The other name for this puckish *puer*, as readers are reminded near the end of *Amores* 1.1 and in the opening verses of the *Ars Amatoria*, is *Amor*:

45 I make a similar argument about the laughter at the beginning of Horace's *Satires* 1.1 in Ch. 4.

46 Morgan (1977) 8 identifies Propertius' programmatic poems as 2.1, 2.10, 2.34, 3.1, 3.3, and 3.9 and states that "[t]here are no programmatic poems in Book I [. . .]" (n. 8). Tibullus' programmatic poems are identified by Cairns (1979) 42 as 1.1 and 2.1.

me miserum! certas habuit puer ille sagittas.
uror, et in uacuo pectore regna Amor.

Wretched me! That boy had reliable arrows.
I'm burning, and in an empty heart reigns Love.
(*Amores* 1.1.25-26)

me Venus artificem tenero praefecit Amori;
Tiphys et Automedon dicar Amoris ego.
ille quidem ferus est et qui mihi saepe repugnet:
sed puer est, aetas mollis et apta regi.

Venus placed me as *maestro* in charge of tender Love;
The Tiphys and Automedon of Love I'll be called.
He indeed is wild and the type to fight against me often:
but he is a boy, soft of age and suitable to be guided.
(*Ars Amatoria* 1.7-10)

When Cupid laughs in the third verse of the opening poem of the *Amores*, love itself laughs, which is to say that the figure who gives his name to the title of the work laughs. Moreover, he does so before he does anything else—even before he steals the foot that seems to change the direction of the speaker's poetic project. This is not only the poet's first impression of Cupid but also the reader's.

In *Amores* 1.6.9-13, when in a flashback the poet recalls his initiation to his role as a lover and, by extension, as a love poet, Cupid is again coupled with laughter:

at quondam noctem simulacraque uana timebam;
mirabar, tenebris quisquis iturus erat.
risit, ut audirem, tenera cum matre Cupido
et leuiter "fies tu quoque fortis" ait.
nec mora, uenit amor [. . .].

But formerly I feared the night and false phantoms;
I was amazed at anyone who was about to go through the shadows.
He laughed, so that I could hear, Cupid with his tender mother,
and lightly said, "You also will become brave."
Without delay, love came [. . .].

Thus twice in the first six poems of a fifty-poem collection, the figure of love is presented

laughing, and laughing deliberately.[47] His mother laughs along.[48] In addition, he laughs to send a message at a moment in which the poet recounts his entry into a generic *topos* of amatory elegy: the paraclausithyron.

Near the structural boundary between the 2nd and 3rd books of the *Amores*, in the eighteenth of nineteen poems in Book 2,[49] Ovid recounts to his friend Macer how he had become ashamed of his light topic and had decided to try his hand at tragedy. He donned the garb of the tragedian—cloak, boots, and scepter. But laughter erupts at the beginning of the v. 15, with its source offered in the next word. It's *Amor* once again:

> *risit Amor pallamque meam pictosque cothurnos*
> *sceptraque privata tam cito sumpta manu.*
>
> Love laughed at my cloak and my painted boots
> and the scepter so quickly taken up by my ordinary hand.

After having been caught playing dress-up, the poet quickly strips back to his amatory clothes. By poem's end, he suggests that Macer, who writes of war, may be happier writing of love. Generic concerns are foremost in his mind.

And then in *Amores* 3.1, the first poem of Ovid's final book in the collection and another spatial boundary point, the poet forecasts his departure from love elegy (which is accomplished in the appropriately laughless *Amores* 3.15). The poet tells how he was walking in a beautiful locale and thinking about what poetry to write when, lo and behold, Elegy herself approached him. She was limping—one of her feet is longer than the other, after all—but Ovid thought that her gait, far from detracting from her beauty, contributed to it. Before Elegy could say anything, Tragedy rushed at Ovid in a huff and asked him when he would finish up with his worthless love

47 He also speaks *leuiter* in v. 12. Venus laughs in *Fasti* 4.5.

48 Venus laughs in *Ars Amatoria* 2.567 (discussed above), *Heroides* 16.83, and *Fasti* 4.5.

49 Lateiner (1978) offers a compelling explanation of the ways in which Callimachean and Hellenistic ideals latent in Ovid's final boundary poem of *Amores* Book 2 invests the poem with programmatic force. He even draws upon play theory and Huizinga . . . a man after my own heart.

poetry. The poet's attention then shifts back to the first of the two representatives of genre, to Elegy in v. 33: “The other, if I recall, smiled sidelong with her eyes [. . .]”— *altera, si memini, limis subrisit ocellis*. Elegy herself—itself—smiles or even offers a subdued little laugh. If nothing else, the textual smile appears as the word for a smile contains the laughter: *sub**risit***.

I draw three conclusions from the passages I have catalogued: 1) laughter in the *Amores* repeatedly occurs at the seams between books, or spatial boundaries; 2) laughter repeatedly coincides with moments in the narrative when Ovid is referring to his beginnings as a love poet or to his potential departures to other genres, which is to say boundaries in content; and 3) two figures represented as laughing are those who give their names to his love elegy: Love and Elegy. The only other figure to laugh in Ovid's *Amores* is the speaker's *puella* herself.[50]

In the opening verses of *Amores* 1.1, the poet sets expectations of genre and then immediately—and laughingly—frustrates them. In so doing, he draws our attention to boundaries between genres and sets new expectations. His poetry will contain occasions of levity, of laughter, and, importantly, of generic self-consciousness—an awareness that he is writing at the boundary of genres. He writes elegy, yes, but his own version of elegy: one that pretends to be epic and attempts to elevate itself with talk of weapons and wars until one of its legs is yanked out from beneath it by the figurehead of another genre, by Love personified or a limping Elegy. But as often as the poet plays with and frustrates epic expectations, he does the same with elegiac ones. His *Amores* are their own puzzle when it comes to genre—a puzzle that distinguishes itself for its originality, its unconventional use of pieces from other puzzles, and its very willingness to change and reassemble itself as the collection progresses. And whatever riddles Ovid throws our way as readers and whatever strange pieces he invites us to assemble in

50 The *puella* laughs in 2.5.51, 3.2.83, and 3.3.20, although she is not explicitly identified as *Corinna* in any of these poems.

the *Amores* only to require us to take them apart in the very next poem, we as readers, like Love and Elegy themselves, can almost always play a role and offer a piece in Ovid's poetic puzzle simply by laughing.

CONCLUSION

> *Poiesis*, in fact, is a play-function. It proceeds within the play-ground of the mind, in a world of its own which the mind creates for it. There things have a very different physiognomy from the one they wear in "ordinary life", and are bound by ties other than those of logic and causality. If a serious statement be defined as one that may be made in terms of waking life, poetry will never rise to the level of seriousness. It lies beyond seriousness, on that more primitive and original level where the child, the animal, the savage and the seer belong, in the region of dream, enchantment, ecstasy, laughter.
>
> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*

In the preceding pages, I have examined how and where laughter appears in specific works of ancient literature. First, I introduced the vocabulary of laughter and the risible and explained how the terms that constitute this vocabulary serve as the visible boundary stones of my investigations. I then set another boundary to my study, but this one in passing; poetry, and the works of Augustan poetry by Vergil, Horace, and Ovid, in particular, occupy my focus.

Immediately, and for the remainder of my introduction, I overstepped this second boundary to examine ancient perspectives on laughter that appear in the prose works of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. My reasons for doing so were to introduce aspects of the explanations of laughter that I use elsewhere in my explorations—the superiority, incongruity, and relief theories—and, furthermore, to highlight the fact that laughter has been an object of fertile and insoluble inquiry for thousands of years.

My own inquiry has proceeded along two independent but parallel paths, to each of which I have devoted three chapters. The first path explored laughter's function as text-directed literary criticism—what I call a textual laugh track. This approach emphasized that the vocabulary of laughter and the risible as used by Vergil, Horace, and Ovid often functions metacommunicatively, offering to the reader a set of directions for how to respond to particular

texts. The second path considered laughter's role as a conspicuous piece in the assembling of specific generic puzzles. Horace's *Satires*, Vergil's *Eclogues*, and Ovid's *Amores* all feature the vocabulary of laughter and the risible in their verses, and they utilize this vocabulary to various genre-determined—and genre-determining—ends.

In my explorations down the first path in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, I emphasized that laughter as a shared, often-contagious human behavior offers a particularly attractive invitation to reader response when it appears in textual form. In my first chapter, I focused on Horace's use of laughter as a means to negative literary criticism. In Chapter 2, I examined how the concept of metacommunication enables an isolated occasion of textual laughter, such as the one that occurs early Vergil's *Eclogue* 3, to have an impact on the tone of a poem far beyond the verse in which it appears. My third chapter continued this investigation of laughter's metacommunicative potential in the midst of inversions and concentrations of the vocabulary of laughter in Horace's *Epistle to Augustus* and Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*.

My explorations along the second path in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 were predicated in large part on my selection of Augustan poetic texts that make frequent use of the vocabulary of laughter and the risible. In Chapter 4, I considered how the Horatian satirist self-consciously invites discussions of laughter—and thus laughter itself—into his poetry and uses this laughter as a destabilizing presence throughout the *Liber Sermonum*. My fifth chapter examined occurrences of laughter in the Theocritean bucolic corpus and drew upon these occurrences as well as ones in Lucertius to assert that laughter functions as a form of poetic play in Vergil's *Eclogues*. In my final chapter, I observed laughter's marked and repeated presence at generically self-conscious moments in Ovid's *Amores*.

Importantly, these paths overlap almost as frequently as terms for laughter and the risible appear in the texts. The overlap can be illustrated through a metaphor I used in my introduction

when I compared a textual laugh to a thread. The two parts of my study (Chapters 1-3; and Chapters 4-6) treated these threads in two different ways. The first part of my study highlighted the fact that every laugh is, in essence, a *loose* thread, but not one that has *become* loose or been pulled through wear and tear. Even the most-tightly-woven occasions of laughter in a text will hang slightly off the page and invite the reader to take hold of them, to engage with them, to explore their texture, and perhaps even to tug on them to see what happens next. The second part of my study focuses on these very same threads, but rather than focusing on their texture, it observed how they are woven into the fabric of the poem itself: where they appear, to what other threads they are connected, and what patterns they create. I have tugged upon and interrogated particular threads of laughter in particular texts, but, in most of these texts, I could just as easily have interrogated the threads I tugged upon . . . or tugged upon the threads I interrogated. The threads remain the very same words for laughter and the risible, simply examined in different ways.

Similarly, textual laughter does not cease to encourage types of reader response when genre is under consideration. The two ideas are part of the same textual fabric. Nevertheless, each of the three authors I have examined employs laughter to different ends: Horace uses laughter in his hexametric poetry to destabilize his text, which he achieves by drawing attention to laughter and, at the same time, by playfully denying its importance; Vergil does not make laughter an explicit subject of his poetry, but he instead allows scattered laughs to establish a tone of poetic play in his *Eclogues*; Ovid combines elements of Horatian and Vergilian laughter as he draws attention to laughter but treats it as a more stable means to metacommunicative and generic play. Despite the fact that the works of these three authors all are typically classified within different genres, they share common threads of laughter and, by extension, play.

Toward notions of play—this seems to be one direction in which the preceding study of

literary laughter has led me, and it is for this reason that I include Johan Huizinga's reflections on poetry and play as an epigraph (one that concludes, fittingly, with laughter). “Poetry as play” invites consideration of the serious consequences of play in the broader Augustan literary climate, a topic for further (and, hopefully, future) inquiry and one that would ground my literary explorations in their historical context.

Yet the textual threads of play are perhaps not as visible (they do not hang as far from the text) as those of laughter. For my part, it is only through laughter that I have arrived at the notion of poetic play at all. Moreover, my investigations of laughter have also led me to explore reader response and genre criticism as well as the works of Plato, Aristotle, Theocritus, Catullus, Lucretius, and Cicero, not to mention the numerous scholars who have explored these texts and ideas before. Thus I hope to have shown how laughter offers itself as a rich and unique subject of literary interpretation, in general, and of the poetry of Vergil, Horace, and Ovid, in particular. A literary laugh remains for the modern audience a powerful point of contact with the ancient world that can transcend time and space, text and interpretation, author and reader, and tap into an experience of literature and life that seems, in a word, human.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrams, M. H. and Harpham, G. G. 1999. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Adams, J. N. 1982. *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Alpers, P. 1979. *The Singer of the* Eclogues*: A Study of Virgilian Pastoral*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Anchor, R. 1978. "History and Play: Johan Huizinga and His Critics." *History and Theory*, vol. 17, no. 1: 63-93.

Asmis, E. 1992. *"*An Epicurean Survey of Poetic Theories (*Philodemus On Poems 5*, cols. 26–36)." *CQ* 42: 395–415.

Arnold, B. 1995. "The Literary Experience of Vergil's Fourth Eclogue." *CJ* 90.2: 143-160.

Anderson, W. S. 1958. "Persius 1. 107-10." *CQ*. 8: 195-197.

——— 1972. "The Form, Purpose, and Position of Horace's Satire I, 8." *AJP* 93: 4–13.

Armstrong, D., Fish, J., Johnston, P. A. and Skinner, M. B., eds. 2004. *Vergil, Philodemus, and the Augustans*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Arnould, Dominique. 1990. *Le rire et les larmes dans la littérature grecque d'Homère à Platon*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Attardo, Salvatore. 1994. *Linguistic theories of humor*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Austin, R. G. 1986. *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidso liber sextus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bakhtin, M. M., Voloshinov, V. N., Medvedev, P. N., & Morris, Pam. 1994. *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Voloshinov*. London: E. Arnold.

Baldry, H. C. 1952. "Who Invented the Golden Age?" *CQ* 2: 83-92.

Barchiesi, A. 1997. *The Poet and the Prince: Ovid and Augustan Discourse*. Berkeley:

University of California Press.

——— 2001. “The Crossing.” In Harrison, S. J. ed. *Texts, Ideas, and the Classics: Scholarship, Theory, and Classical Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 142–163.

Barnes, W. R. 1988. “Horace *Sermones* 1.5.104.” *Prudentia* 20.1: 57-59.

Bassett, S. E. 1905. “Notes on the Bucolic Diaeresis.” *TAPA* 36: 111-124.

Bateson, G. 1956. “The Message 'This is Play.'” In Schaffner, B. ed. *Group Processes: Transactions of the Second Conference*. New York: Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation. 145-242.

Berg, W. J. 1974. *Early Virgil*. London: Athlone Press.

Bergler, E. 1956. *Laughter and the Sense of Humor*. New York: Intercontinental Medical Book Corportation.

Boyd, B. W. 1997. *Ovid's Literary Loves: Influence and Innovation in the* Amores. Ann Arbor: Univesrity of Michigan Press.

Boyle, A. J. 1977. “Virgil's Pastoral Echo.” *Ramus* 6: 121-131.

Breed, B. W. 2000a. “Silenus and the Imago Vocis in *Eclogue* 6.” *HSCP* 100: 327-340.

——— 2000b. “Imitations of Originality: Theocritus and Lucretius at the Start of the *Eclogues*.” *Vergilius* 46: 3-20.

Brink, C. O. 1946. “Callimachus and Aristotle: An Inquiry into Callimachus' ΠΡΟΣΠΡΑΞΙΦΑΝΗΝ.” *CQ* 40: 11-26.

——— 1963. *Horace on Poetry*, Vol. I: *Prolegomena to the Literary Epistles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——— 1971. *Horace on Poetry*, Vol. II: *The Ars Poetica*. Cambridge: Cambridge: University Press.

——— 1982. *Horace on Poetry*, Vol. III: *Epistles Book II: The Letters to Augustus and Florus*.

Cambridge: Cambridge: University Press.

Brown, E. L. 1981. “The Lycidas of Theocritus' Idyll 7.” *HSCP* 85: 59-100.

Buchheit, V. 1968. “Homerparodie und Literaturkritik in Horazens Satiren I, 7 und I, 9.” *Gymnasium* 75: 519–55.

Cairns, F. 1972. *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

——— 1979. *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univesrity Press.

Cameron, A. 1968. “The First Edition of Ovid's *Amores*.” *CQ* 18: 320-333.

——— 1995. *Callimachus and His Critics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chantraine, P. 1980. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: histoire des mots.* 4 vols. Paris: klinksieck.

Chiron, P. 2001. *Un rhéteur méconnu: Démétrios (Ps.-Démétrios de Phalère*). Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin.

Claes, Paul. 2002. *Concatenatio Catulliana: A New Reading of the Carmina*. Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben.

Clarke, J. R. 2007. *Looking at Laughter. Humor, Power, and Transgression in Roman Visual Culture, 100 B.C.–A.D. 250*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Clausen, W. V. 1994. *A Commentary on Virgil*, Eclogues. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Clauss, J. J. 2003. “Once Upon a Time on Cos: A Banquet with Pan on the Side in Theocritus 'Idyll 7.'” *HSCP* 101: 289-302.

Clayman, D. 1980. *Callimachus'* Iambi. Mnemosyne Supplementa 59. Leiden: Brill.

Coleman, R. 1977. *Vergil:* Eclogues. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Connors, C. M. 2005. “From Turnips to Turbot: Allusion to Epic in Roman Satire.” In Freudenburg, K. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 123-145.

Conte, G. B. 1994a. *Genres and Readers: Lucretius, Love Elegy, Pliny's Encyclopedia*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

——— 1994b. *Latin Literature: A History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Corbeill, A. 1996. *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Costa, C. D. N. 1984. *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura V*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Crane, G. 1987 “The Laughter of Aphrodite in Theocritus, Idyll 1.” *HSCP* 91: 161-184.

Curtius, E. R. 1953. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

de Frein, F. “Withnail & I – 25 Years On.” *The Global Dispatches*. Retrived February, 9 2013 from http://www.theglobaldispatches.com/articles/withnail-i-%E2%80%93-25-years-on.

Derrida, J. and Ronell, A. 1980. “The Law of Genre.” *Critical Inquiry* 7, On Narrative: 55-81.

Desclos, M-L. ed. 2000. *Le rire des Grecs: anthropologie du rire en Gréce ancienne*. Grenoble: Editions Jérôme Millon.

Dickie, M. W. 1981. “The Disavowal of *Invidia* in Roman Iamb and Satire.” *PLLS* 3: 183-208.

Dover, K. 1989. *Greek Homosexuality*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Du Quesnay, I. M. Le M. 1976. “Vergil's Fourth *Eclogue*.” *PLLS* 1: 25-100.

——— 1984. “Horace and Maecenas: The Propaganda Value of *Sermones* I.” In Woodman, A. J. and West, D. eds. *Poetry and Politics in the Age of Augustus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 19-58.

Edmonson, M. S. 1987. “Notes on Laughter.” *Anthropological Linguistics* 29: 23-34.

Egan, R. B. 1996. “Corydon's Winning Words in *Eclogue* 7.'” *Phoenix* 50: 233-239.

Elder, J. P. 1961. “*Non iniussa cano:* Virgil's Sixth Eclogue.” *HSPh* 65: 109-25.

Ellis, R. ed. 1889. *A Commentary on Catullus*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Else, G. F. 1963. *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Ewin, R. E. 2001. “Hobbes on Laughter.” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 51: 29-40.

Fantazzi, C. and Querbach, C. W. 1985. “Sound and Substance: A Reading of Virgil's Seventh *Eclogue*.” *Phoenix* 39: 355-367.

Fantham, E. 2004. *The Roman World of Cicero's* De Oratore. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fantuzzi, M. and Hunter, R. 2004. *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Farrell, J. 2003. “Classical Genre in Theory and Practice.” *New Literary History* 34: 383-403.

Feeney, D. 2002. “*Una Cum Scriptore Meo*: Poetry, Principate and the Tradition of Literary History in the *Epistle of Augustus*.” In Woodman, A. J. and Feeney, D. eds. 172-186.

Fordyce, C. J., ed. 1961. *Catullus*. Oxford.

Fowler, A. 1982. *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Freud, S. and Brill, A. A. 1916. *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*. New York: Moffat, Yard and Co.

Freudenburg, K. 1993. *The Walking Muse. Horace on the Theory of Satire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Fry, W. 1963. *Sweet Madness: A Study of Humor*. Palo Alto: Pacific Books.

Fuller, R. G. C. and Sheehy-Skeffington, A. 1974. “Effects of Group Laughter on Responses to

Humourous Material, A Replication and Extension." *Psychological Reports* 35: 531-534.

Funke, H. 1976. "Zur ars Poetica des Horaz." Hermes 104: 191-209.

Furley, D. J. 2007. "Lucretius the Epicurean: On the History of Man." In Gale, M. *Oxford Readings in Lucretius*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 158-181.

Gale, M. 1994. *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——— 1997. "Propertius 2.7: *Militia Amoris* and the Ironies of Elegy." *JRS* 87: 77-91.

Giangrande, G. 1968. "Théocrite, Simichidas et les *Thalysies*." *AC* 37: 491-533.

——— 1970. "Catullus 67." *QUCC* 9: 84-131.

Giangrande, L. 1972. *The Use of Spoudaiogeloion in Greek and Roman Literature*. The Hague: Mouton.

Gibson, R. K. 2003. *Ovid* Ars Amatoria *Book 3*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gigante, M. and Capasso M. 1989. "Il ritorno di Virgilio a Ercolano." *SIFC* 3: 3-7.

Glover, T. R. 1934. "The Literature of the Augustan Age." In Cook, S. A., Adcock, F. E., and Charlesworth, M. P. eds. *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol X*.

Gowers, E. 1994. "Horace, Satires 1.5: An Inconsequential Journey." *PCPS* 39: 48–66.

——— 2002. "Blind Eyes and Cut Throats: Amnesia and Silence in Horace Satires 1.7." *CP* 97 : 145–61.

Grant, M. and Fiske, G. C. 1924. "Cicero's *Orator* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*." *HSPh* 35: 1-74.

Grant, M. 1924. *The Ancient Rhetorical Theories of the Laughable. The Greek Rhetoricians and Cicero*. University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, 21. Madison: University of Wisconsin.

Green, P. 1982. *Ovid: The Erotic Poems. Translated with an Introduction and Notes*.

Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Griffith, M. 1994. “Contest and Contradiction in Early Greek Poetry.” In Griffith, M. and Mastronarde, D. eds. *Cabinet of the Muses: Essays on Classical and Comparative Literature in Honor of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer*. Atlanta: Scholars Press. 185-207.

Grube, G. M. A. 1964. “The Date of Demetrius 'On Style.'” *Phoenix* 18: 294-302.

Gow, A. S. F. 1952. *Theocritus.* 2 vols, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gowers, E. 1994. “Horace, *Satire* 1.5: An Inconsequential Journey.” *PCPS* 39: 48-66.

——— 2006. “Blind Eyes and Cut Throats: Amnesia and Silence in Horace *Satires* 1.7.” *CP* 97: 145-161.

——— 2012. *Horace: Satires Book 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gutzwiller, K. J. 1991. *Theocritus' Pastoral Analogies: The Formation of a Genre*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Halliwell, S. 1991. “The Uses of Laughter in Greek Culture.” *CQ* 41: 279–96.

——— 1993. *Plato Republic 5: with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd.

——— 2008. *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Halperin, D. M. 1983. *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Harrison, S. J. 2007. *Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hardie, P. 1998. *Virgil*. *Greece & Rome: New Surveys in the Classics* 28. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hawkins, S. 2012. “On the Oscanism *salaputium* in Catullus 53.” *TAPA* 142: 329-353.

Henderson, J. 1994. “On Getting Rid of Kings: Horace *Satire* 1.7.” *CQ* 44: 146-170.

——— 1998. “Virgil's Third *Eclogue*: How Do You Keep an Idiot in Suspense?.” *CQ* 48: 213-28 (= Volk 2008: 125-154).

Hendrickson, G. L. 1900. “Horace, Serm. I.4: A Protest and a Programme.” *AJP* 21: 121–42.

——— 1927. “Satura Tota Nostra Est.” *CP* 22: 46–60.

Henry, J. 1878. *Aeneidea, or Critical, Exegetical, and Aesthetical Remarks on the Aeneid, Vol. II*. Dublin: C. E. Klinkicht & Son, Meissen.

Hinds, S. E. 1987. *The Metamorphosis of Persephone*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hobbes, T. 1839. *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, Volume 3*. Molesworth, W. ed. London: Bohn.

——— 1840. *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, Volume 4*. Molesworth, W. ed. London: Bohn.

Holland, N. 1975a. “Unity Identity Text Self.” *PMLA* 90.5: 813-822.

——— 1975b. *5 Readers Reading*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hollis, A. S. 1990. *Callimachus: Hecale*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Housman, A. E. 1931. “Praefanda.” *Hermes* 66: 402-12.

Hubbard, T. K. 1981. “The Structure and Programmatic Intent of Horace's First Satire.” *Latomus* 40: 305-321.

——— 1995a. “Allusive Artistry and Vergil's Revisionary Program: Eclogues 1-3.” *MD* 34, 37-67 (= Volk 2008: 79-109).

——— 1995b. “Intertextual Hermeneutics in Vergil's Fourth and Fifth Eclogues.” *CJ* 91: 11-23.

Huizinga, J. 1955. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Hunter, R. 1985. "Horace on Friendship and Free Speech. (*Epistles* 1.18 and *Satires* 1.4)." *Hermes* 113: 480-490.

——— 1999. *Theocritus. A Selection (Idylls 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11 and 13)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——— 2006. "Virgil's *Ecl*. I and the Origins of Pastoral." In Fantuzzi, M. and Papanghelis, T. eds. *Brill's Companion to Greek and Latin Pastoral*. Leiden: Brill. 263-273.

Jäkel, S. and Timonen, A. eds. *Laughter Down the Centuries, Vol. I*. Turku: Annales Universitatis Turkuensis.

Janko, R. 1984. *Aristotle On Comedy: Towards a Reconstruction of* Poetics *II*. London: Duckworth.

——— 2000. *On Poems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

——— 2011. *Philodemus* On Poems *Books 3-4 with the fragments of Aristotle's* Poetics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kant, I. and Walker, N. 2007. *Critique of Judgement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Katz, P. 2009. "Teaching the Elegiac Lover in Ovid's *Amores*." *CW* 102: 163-167.

Keith, A. 1994. "*Corpus Eroticum*: Elegiac Poetics and Elegiac *Puellae* in Ovid's *Amores*." *CW* 88: 27-40.

Kenney, E. J. 1961. "The First Satire of Juvenal." *PCPS*. 8: 29-40.

——— ed. 1995. *P. Ovidi Nasonis Amores, Medicamina faciei femineae, Ars amatoria, Remedia amoris*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kidd, S. 2011. "Laughter Interjections in Greek Comedy." *CQ* 61:445-459.

Kiessling, A. and Heinze, R. 1961. *Q. Horatius Flaccus, II, Satiren*. Berlin: Weidmann.

Kilpatrick, R. S. 1990. *The Poetry of Criticism: Horace,* Epistles *II and* Ars Poetica. Edmonton:

University of Alberta Press.

Kißel, W. 1990. *Aules Persius Flaccus, Satiren. Herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitatsverlag.

Kroll, W. 1924. *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur.* Stuttgart: Metzler.

Krostenko, B. 2001. *Cicero, Catullus, and the Language of Social Performance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Laird, A. ed. 2006. *Ancient Literary Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

——— 2007. "The *Ars Poetica*." In Harrison, S. J. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 132-143.

Lawson, T. J., Downing, B., and Cetola, H. 1998. "An Attributional Explanation for the Effect of Audience Laughter on Perceived Funniness." *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 20: 243-249.

Lateiner, D. 1978. "Ovid's Homage to Callimachus and Alexandrian Poetic Theory (AM. 2, 19)." *Hermes* 106: 188-196.

——— 1995. *Sardonic Smile: Nonverbal Behavior in Homeric Epic*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

——— 2002. "Pouring Bloody Drops (*Iliad* 16.459): The Grief of Zeus." Colby Quarterly, 38.1: 42-61.

Leach E. W. 1968. "The Unity of *Eclogue* 6." *Latomus* 27: 13-32.

Leeman, A. D., Pinkster, H., and Rabbie, E. 1989. *M. Tullius Cicero* De Oratore *Libri III*. Vol. 3. Heidelberg: Winter.

Levine, D. 1983. "Theoklymenos and the Apocalypse." *CJ* 79: 1-7.

Luck, G. 1969. *The Latin Love Elegy*. London: Methuen.

Lyne, R. O. A. M. 1995. *Horace: Behind the Public Poetry*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Martin, R. H. 1976. *Terence: Adelphoe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McKeown, J. C. 1987. *Ovid: Amores. Vol I. Text, Prolegomena and Commentary in Four Volumes.* Liverpool: Francis Cairns.

——— 1989. *Ovid: Amores. Vol. II. A Commentary on Book One*. Liverpool: Francis Cairns.

Merrill, E. 1893. *Catulli Veronensis Liber*. Boston: Ginn.

Miller, J. F. 1993. "Ovidian Allusion and the Vocabulary of Memory." *MD* 30: 153-164.

——— 2013. "Breaking the Rules: Elegy, Matrons and Mime." In Thorson, T. S. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Latin Love Elegy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moles, J. 1985. "Cynicism in Horace's *Epistles* 1." *PLLS* 5: 33–60.

——— 1991. "The Dramatic Coherence of Ovid, *Amores* 1.1 and 1.2." *CQ* 41: 551-554.

——— 2007. "Philosophy and Ethics." In Harrison, S. J. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 165-180.

Montaigne, M. & Cohen, J. M. 1993. *Essays*. London: Penguin Books.

Monro, D.H. 1951. *The Argument of Laughter*. Victoria: Melbourne University Press.

Morgan K. 1977. *Ovid's Art of Imitation: Propertius in the* Amores. Leiden: Brill.

Morgan, L. G. 2010. *Musa Pedestris: Metre and Meaning in Roman Verse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Morreall, J. 1982. "A New Theory of Laughter." *Philosophical Studies* 42: 243-254.

——— 1983. *Taking Laughter Seriously*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Murgatroyd, P. 1975. "*Milita Amores* and the Roman Elegists." *Latomus* 34: 59–79.

Mynors, R. A. B. ed. 1969. *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Muecke, F. 1975. “Virgil and the Genre of Pastoral.” *AUMLA* 44: 169-180.

Müller, R. 1994. “Demokrit—der 'lachende Philosoph.'” In Jäkel, S. and Timonen, A. eds. *Laughter Down the Centuries, Vol. I*. 39-41.

Niedenthal, P. M., Mermillod, M., Maringer, M, and Hess, U. 2010. “The Simulation of Smiles (SIMS) model: Embodied simulation and the meaning of facial expression” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33: 417-480.

Nightingale, A. W. 1995. *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nisbet, R. G. M. and Hubbard, M. 1970. *A Commentary on Horace*: Odes, *Book I*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Nisbet, R. G. M. 1978. “Virgil's Fourth Eclogue: Easterners and Westerners.” *BICS* 25: 59-78 (= Volk 2008: 155-188).

Nosanchuk, T. A. and Lightstone, J. 1974. “Canned Laughter and Public and Private Conformity.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 29:153-156.

Norden, E. 1926. *P. Vergilius maro: Aeneis Buch VI*, 4th edn. Stuttgart: Teubner.

Northrop, M. 1983. “Vergil on the Birth of Poetry: A Reading of the Fourth Eclogue.” In Deroux, C. ed. *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 3. Brussels: Latomus. 111-25.

Oliensis, E. 1991. “Canidia, Canicula, and the Decorum of Horace's *Epodes*.” *Arethusa* 24.1: 107-138.

——— 1998. *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Paffenroth, K. 1994. “A Note on the Dating of Demetrius' *On Style*.” *CQ* 44: 280-281.

Palmer, L. R. 1954. *The Latin Language*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Papanghelis, T. D., Harrison, S. J., Frangoulidis, S. eds. *Generic Interfaces in Latin Literature: Encounters, Interactions and Transformations*. Trends in Classics – Supplementary

Volumes 20. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Parker, A. R. 1986. “Comic Theory in the *Satires* of Horace.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Petrini, M. 1997. *The Child and the Hero: Coming of Age in Catullus and Vergil*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Pfeiffer, R. ed. 1949-1953. *Callimachus, Fragmenta. Hymni et epigrammata*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Platow, M. J. et al. 2005. “'It’s not funny if they’re laughing': Self-categorization, social influence, and responses to canned laughter.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 41: 542-550.

Plaza, M. 2000. *Laughter and Derision in Petronius' Satyrica: A Literary Study*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.

——— 2006. *The Function of Humour in Roman Verse* Satire. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Porter, J. I. 2011. “Against λεπτότης: Rethinking Hellenistic Aesthetics.” In Erskine, A. and Llewellyn-Jones, L. eds. *Creating a Hellenistic World*. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales. 271-312.

Provine, R. 2000. *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation*. New York: Viking.

Puelma, M. 1960. “Die Dichterbegegnung in Theokrits 'Thalysien.'” *Mus. Helv.* 17: 144-64.

Putnam, M. 1995. “Pastoral Satire.” *Arion* 3: 303-316.

Reckford, K. 1999. “Only a Wet Dream? Hope and Scepticism in Horace, Satire 1.5.” *AJP* 120: 525–54.

Richlin, A. 1992. *The Garden of Priapus. Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*. 2nd edn.

Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Robson, E. I. 1928. “Virgil, *Eclogue* IV.18-20.” *CR* 42: 123-124.

Roes, A. 1934. “The Representation of the Chimaera.” *JHS* 54: 21-25.

Rosenmeyer, T. G. “Ancient Literary Genres: A Mirage?” In Laird, A. ed. *Ancient Literary Criticism*. 421-439.

Ross, D. O., Jr. 1975. *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy and Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rudd, N. 1966. *The Satires of Horace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——— 1989.

——— 1997. *Horace: Satires and Epistles: A Verse Translation with an Introduction and Note Persius: Satires*. 4th edn. London: Penguin.

Rumpf, L. 2008. “Bucolic *nomina* in Virgil and Theocritus: On the Poetic Technique of Virgil's *Eclogues*.” In Volk, K. ed. 64-78.

Sacks, M. (n.d.). “Canned Laughter: A History Reconstructed. An Interview with Ben Glenn II, Television Historian.” Retrieved November 26, 2013 from http://www.andheresthekicker.com/ex_ben_glenn.php.

Sauter, D. 2010. “More Than Happy: The Need for Disentangling Positive Emotions.” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 19: 36-40.

Scott, W. C. 1969. “Catullus and Cato (c. 56).” *CP* 64: 24-29.

Segal, C. P. 1967. “Vergil's *caelatum opus:* An Interpretation of the Third *Eclogue*.” *AJP* 88: 279-308

——— 1969. *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses. A Study in the Transformations of a Literary Symbol*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag.

Segal, E. 1968. *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Serrao, G. 1971. *Problemi di poesia alessandrina*. Vol. 1: *Studi su Teocrito*. Filologia e critica, 9. Rome.

Shackleton Bailey, D. R. ed. 2001. *Q. Horatius Flaccus: Opera*. 4th edn., Leipzig: Saur.

Stewart, Z. 1959. "The Song of Silenus." *HSCP* 64: 179–205.

——— 1994. "Laughter in the Greek Philosophers: a Sketch." In Jäkel, S. and Timonen, A. eds. *Laughter Down the Centuries, Vol. I*. 29-37.

Stuart, D. R. 1921. "On Vergil *Eclogue* iv. 60-63." *CP* 16: 209-230.

Syme, R. 1978. *History in Ovid*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tanner, R. G. 1972. "Catullus LVI." *Hermes* 100: 506-508.

Trédé, M. and Hoffmann, P. eds. 1998. *Le rire des anciens:actes du colloque international, (Université de Rouen, École normale supérieure, 11-13 janvier 1995)*. Paris: Presses de l'École Normale Supérieure.

Uden, James. 2007. "Impersonating Priapus." *AJP* 128: 1-26.

Van Rooy, C. A. 1965. *Studies in Classical Satire and Related Literary Theory*. Leiden: Brill.

Van Sickle, J. 2000. "Virgil vs Cicero, Lucretius, Theocritus, Callimachus, Plato & Homer: Two Programmatic Plots in the First Bucolic." *Vergilius* 46: 21-58.

Volk, K. 2002. *The Poetics of Latin Didactic: Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid, Manilius*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

——— 2006. "*Ars Amatoria Romana*: Ovid on Love as a Cultural Construct." In Gibson, R., Green, S., and Sharrock, A. eds. *The Art of Love: Bimillenial Essays on Ovid's Ars*

Amatoria and Remedia Amoris. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 235-251.

——— ed. 2008. *Vergil's Eclogues*. New York: Oxford University Press.

——— 2010. *Ovid.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Wagenvoort, H. 1956. *Studies in Roman Literature, Culture, and Religion*. Leiden: Brill.

Watson, W. 2012. *The Lost Second Book of Aristotle's* Poetics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Weiss, Michael. 1996. "An Oscanism in Catullus 53." *CP* 91: 353-359.

West, M. L. 1974. *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Wheeler, A. L. 1912. "*Satura* as a Generic Term." *CP* 7: 457-477.

White, E. B. 1954. *The Second Tree from the Corner*. New York: Harper.

Whybrew, L. 2006. "The Relationship between Horace's *Sermones* and *Epistulae* Book 1: 'Are the Letters of Horace Satires?'" Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Canterbury.

Williams, F. J. 1971. "A Theophany in Theocritus." *CQ* 21: 137-45.

Williams, G. 1972. *Horace*. *Greece & Rome: New Surveys in the Classics* 6. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

——— 1974. "A Version of Pastoral: Virgil, *Eclogue* 4." In Woodman, A. J. and West, D. (eds.), *Quality and Pleasure in Latin Poetry.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 31-46.

Wilson, A. 2012. "Louis C.K. and the Rise of the Laptop Loners." *LA Review of Books*. Retrieved November 9, 2013 from https://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/louis-c-k-and-the-rise-of-the-laptop-loners.

Woodman, A. J. and Feeney, D. eds. 2000. *Traditions and Contexts in the Poetry of Horace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wormell, D. E. W. 1960. "The Riddles in Virgil's Third Eclogue." *CQ* 10: 29-32.

Zetzel, J. E. G. 1980. “Horace’s *Liber Sermonum*: The Structure of Ambiguity.” *Arethusa* 13: 59–77.

——— 2002. “Dreaming about Quirinus: Horace’s *Satires* and the Development of Augustan Poetry.” In Woodman, A. J. and Feeney, D. eds. 38-52.